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THE

NATURE OF EVIL

CONSIDERED IN

A LETTER TO THE REV. EDWARD BEECHER, D. D.
AUTHOR OF "THE CONFLICT OF AGES."

BY

HENRY JAMES.

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
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PREFACE.

I HAVE endeavored in the following pages to supply a more exact formula of the controversy betweeen Natural and Revealed religion, between Philosophy and Christianity, than has been hitherto popularly attained.

Natural religion affirms the absoluteness of morality. It supposes that the good and the evil man, the angel and the devil, are intrinsically or essentially different persons; and that the Divine attitude towards the one consequently is full of benignity, and towards the other full of wrath.

Revealed religion, on the other hand, affirms

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the intrinsic relativity of morality. It declares that the legal revelation of God—His revelation in conscience or the law—was utterly subordinate or ancillary to His final revelation in Christ; and so turns moral distinctions among men into a mere shadow of profounder spiritual distinctions, which take their rise exclusively in the relation of the soul to Christ.

Natural religion affirms the rectitude of human nature; and consequently makes sin to begin only on the hither or moral side of consciousness. The remedy for sin on this theory, does not involve the exhibition of any redemptive energy on the part of God towards man, but simply the sinner's own reformation of life.

Revealed religion affirms the corruption of human nature; and makes sin therefore to originate exclusively on the thither or spiritual side of consciousness. Its remedy for sin accordingly, is a redemption of man from the

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power of his nature, and a consequent renewal of heavenly influence in his heart.

Christianity is the doctrine of this great redemption. It declares that Jesus Christ has actually effected a complete redemption or salvation of man from the power of evil, and bids mankind rejoice accordingly in the assurance of a regenerated nature. For Christianity shows that this redemption took place only by the humiliation of God to carnal conditions, or, what is the same thing, by the assumption of human nature on the part of God. In Christ God became man, and man became God. Henceforward then we have not merely a friend at court, the court itself is in our interest. The total royalty and the total sanctity of heaven are embodied in one of our own nature; and no breath of Divine influence penetrates to heaven or to hell, unshaped by that intimate and intense affinity.

Philosophy is as yet unenlightened by Reve-

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lation. It has hitherto been an humble parasite of Natural religion, until now at length it appears to be devouring its ancient prop, and so preparing itself, we may hope, for new and superior ties. From the very dawn of my intellectual life, I have been exercised in studious efforts after a philosophic solution of the problem of human responsibility; but Philosophy gave me no help. My concern was to discover how evil in the creature could consist with the Creator's perfection. Philosophy told me that evil was primarily a phenomenon of the moral life, or argued a relation of complete independence between Creator and creature, in order to its very inception. And what is very sad, my ecclesiastical teachers were no wiser than my philosophical ones. They were both alike unable to show me how this independence, which they made thus necessary to give me a capacity for sin, could come about, without at the same time legitimating every possible issue of it;

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that is to say, without vitiating the very responsibility it was summoned to explain.

The key of the enigma I found only in the theology of Swedenborg. I made in the interval one or two publications, incidentally vindicating the truth, so far as I apprehended it. But my apprehension was extremely partial and infirm; and I have no difficulty whatever in acknowledging these books to have been little more than a hearty outcry against established and insensate error, and a prophecy of advancing knowledge. I hope my reader will find fulfilled in this little volume, all and more than all the promise his indulgent eye may have detected in the former ones.

New York, January, 1855.

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A LETTER

TO THE

REV. EDWARD BEECHER.

DEAR SIR:

The unfeigned sympathy with which your recent work, entitled "*The Conflict of Ages*," has impressed me for your intellectual struggles must be my apology for thus publicly addressing you.

If the struggle depicted in that work were a strictly individual one, or significant merely of your own intellectual condition, a public appeal would be inappropriate. But your atti-

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tude is very broadly representative. Your theologic experience reflects that of numberless thousands, though it is at the same time true that only one here and there is seen lifting his hands to heaven, and loudly imploring deliverance, while the vast majority lock the sullen pain in their own bosoms, and dying, make no sign. I am not actuated, so far as I am aware, by any presumptuous expectations in aiming to meet the needs of this afflicted brotherhood. I have simply supposed that some of them might willingly listen to one who has shared all their perplexities, setting forth a few of those indisputable truths which have brought him repose. At all events, I anticipate a most agreeable and genial labor in pursuing the train of inquiry opened by your pages, and feel very sure that however great the intellectual differences between us may appear to be, you will find them qualified on my part by a perfect personal tenderness and respect.

I cannot help acknowledging at the start, that I shall probably be obliged to animadvert with some severity upon the prevalent Ecclesi-

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asticism. But I protest with the utmost sincerity in advance, that I have not the remotest intention to reflect upon any individual, and that my criticism is not urged from the interests of any fancied newer or hostile ecclesiasticism. We are all of us more or less involved in some branch of the reigning ecclesiasticism, Catholic, Protestant, or Unitarian, either partakers of its spirit, or at all events indebted to its inappreciable traditions, and I should be for my own part extremely slow to desire any thing but a spiritual separation from it. If we are to have any ecclesiasticism, let it be that which has come down to us hoary with human use, which is associated with the world's best names and memories, which has always, in spite of a thousand infirmities, pillowed the reverend head of age, diffused a timely awe in the heart of childhood, nursed the sentiment of human brotherhood until science has grown intelligent enough to grasp it, and which is still capable of expanding to all the ritual needs likely to be begotten of a larger spirit. We want no newness of the letter, but only a newness of spirit.

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Allow me, then, before addressing myself to the heart of the controversy, and purely by way of familiarizing you beforehand with the general scope of my essay, to indulge in a slight critical prelude, or gestation, designed to show the striking insufficiencies of your intellectual method.

It is my conviction that the established Theology excludes any rational solution of the problem as to the nature and origin of Evil. That theology has been chiefly valuable in fact for having offered shelter to certain literal traditions and verities, which have hitherto transcended the grasp of human reason. It has faithfully guarded the literal truths of the Divine being and perfection, of the essential dependence of man, or the unceasing activity of the Divine providence, of the rightful divinity or lordship of Jesus Christ, of the need of a spiritual conformity to him, of the inspiration of the Scriptures, or what is the same thing, the reality of Revelation, and of a future state of existence. But these truths, owing to a fatal defect, as it strikes me, in its mode of

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intellectually envisaging them, have as yet made little or no impression upon the rational mind of the race, and at best have effected an uneasy lodgment only in its verbal memory. I certainly do not say these things by way of reproach. The popular Theology in doing thus much, has doubtless done an incalculable service to the race. I simply mean to say that the truths it has preserved for us, *are truths of the very life of man*, and that their adequate or rational illustration must, therefore, in the nature of things, transcend the ecclesiastical sphere, and take place only in the advanced life of their votaries.

You yourself have repeatedly stated that this great "Conflict of Ages," whose history you have so ably, so conscientiously, and so tenderly portrayed, makes no progress; that, though equally good and truth-seeking men espouse opposite sides of the quarrel, it yet remains as far from settlement as in the days of Augustine. It seems to me that this consideration alone should instantly determine every good man to abandon the conflict under its

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present aspect, as one intrinsically dishonest. Every honest conflict, every contention urged by nature, is in order to victory, to the victory of goodness and truth over evil and falsity. If, therefore, a conflict lasts from age to age, not between good and evil men, but between good men exclusively—men who feel an equal dependence upon the one source of truth, and are equally intent upon obeying every admonition of that dependence—if this conflict produce no result, nor any promise of result, but simply go on to propagate its own lazy length, its own torpid existence, it seems to me imperative at once upon all good men to dismiss it as intrinsically vicious and insoluble. Its protracted barrenness, its irreversible practical imbecility, refuse to be accounted for on any milder hypothesis.

The remarkable remedy you propose—allow me to say it without offence, since it is the noble air of candor and mental independence conspicuous throughout your book, which emboldens me to such frankness—the novel mode of adjustment you yourself propose for this

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conflict, only demonstrates afresh its intrinsic viciousness. You are entirely mistaken in supposing that the burden of doubt and perplexity which the problem of evil devolves upon the thoughtful mind, is going to be relieved by any efforts however plausible to push back the historic beginnings of our responsibility. Place those beginnings where you will, the essential question still recurs, "How shall a dependent creature of God come into such relations of independence, as to arouse in his bosom a sentiment of responsibility?" You appear to think that the answer to this question is purely historical, and that if we could get some information concerning the events that preceded our present earthly epiphany, we should have no difficulty in constructing an exact and ample Theodicy. On this imagination you have framed your hypothesis of pre-existence.

But the difficulty as it appears to me does not imply any lack of historical knowledge. It implies only an infirmity of our reason, or our powers of intellectual digestion, which are sometimes inadequate to resolve the facts of

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knowledge, and leave us meanwhile to suffer the horrors of spiritual water-brash and acidity. For example, moral responsibility has its beginnings in you and me every day. The problem is exhibited under as clear a form in our case as in Adam's or Methusaleh's; and the solution it demands therefore, is not rendered impracticable by any defect of historical information. What then hinders us attaining to this solution? Evidently nothing but prejudice. Our reason is drugged by prejudice, prejudice derived from our theologic training, and until we shake this prejudice off, we shall never get any sufficient glimpse of the truth. Nothing, I think, would be easier to show, than that the entire infirmity of your book viewed as a Theodicy, attributes itself to the specific intellectual disqualification operated by the old Theology. This theology, against whose stony udders my own infantile gums equally with yours have been long and solicitously pressed, only to be withdrawn again like your own lacerated and bleeding, not merely makes it impossible to apprehend aright any moral

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problem, but also, when fairly interpreted, flatly denies the possibility of morality, and turns its existence into an illusion. Let me make this plain.

The old theology was originally a body of literal dogmas and precepts concerning the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, and concerning the benefits and obligations which that revelation imposed upon mankind. When these literal dogmas and precepts had found some acceptance with the world, and felt emboldened consequently to look for more—in brief, when they had got an *ecclesiastical* embodiment—they aspired of course to put on a strictly logical form, or to get themselves ratified by the human understanding as well as the human heart. But the human understanding was still unfledged. It had had as yet no scientific lift out of nature, but remained in an intensely grovelling and sensuous state, and the logical furtherance and justification it gave to the truths of Revelation, was consequently grossly naturalistic.

Accordingly the prime defect, even down

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to our own day, of the theology thus begotten, is fitly expressed by the term *naturalism*. That is to say, our ancestral theology seeks to vindicate divine and supernatural truths upon strictly natural principles, upon the methods of nature. It looks upon Time and Space, which are the universal elements of Nature, as absolute, or as furnishing the elements of the Divine existence also; and hence of necessity it regards creation as primarily natural, or as a phenomenon of space and time. In other words, it supposes that there was a certain time *when* creation was not, and a certain space *where* it was not, and that Deity then lifted himself out of an antecedent inertia and said, let all the realm of visible nature, sky and earth, land and water, mineral and vegetable, animal and man, come into being. Thus it makes God to have been *essentially* incarnate, or a partaker *in se* of physical attributes, because on any other supposition He would have been incapable of discerning the difference between natural objects. The creator of nature must have him-

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self possessed a natural or physical organization, wherewith to observe the facts of natural order, and pronounce them very good. He must have possessed natural organs of vision wherewith to discern the difference between day and night: He must have possessed natural organs of smell to discern the difference between the rose and the violet: He must have possessed natural organs of hearing to discern the difference between the inarticulate sounds of nature, and the articulate speech of man: and so forth. Thus the cosmological method of the old theology unspiritualizes the Divine existence and operation, by reducing God to the dimensions of nature, or making creation a physical phenomenon. It assumes as I have already said the essential incarnation of Deity, and hence by anticipation utterly vacates the truth of His alleged historical incarnation in Christ Jesus.

Strictly speaking indeed the old theology does more than this. It not merely vacates the logical truth of the alleged historic fact, it also denies the physical possibility of the literal fact itself. For what is already done cannot remain

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to be done, and if God be essentially incarnate, or subject to nature, of course His incarnation can never become an historical process. But I do not care to push this phase of the contradiction. I am content to show that by maintaining the naturalistic or sensuous theory of creation, you utterly supersede the rational ground upon which alone the historical incarnation of God in Christ Jesus is asserted to have taken place. For that ground is every where asserted to have been the spiritual death of man, as evinced in his moral corruption : and the very existence of morality in man is cut off by the theory in question. If creation be a physical act of God, the phenomena of the moral world become strictly unintelligible. If creation be an outward act of Deity, an act of His arbitrary power or will, it is instantly clear that He alone is responsible for all its contents, and the creature is pronounced *ipso facto* incapable of drawing a moral breath. If the creative act be a physical act, that is, an act of pure will or power, then of course the issue must perfectly reflect that will or power, and no possible

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ground can arise for the creature to reflect upon himself. Even a consciousness of himself would in that case be totally impossible to the creature. For self-consciousness implies freedom, implies rationality, implies a will of one's own, which implication is obviously disavowed by the hypothesis in question, since it represents the creature as absolutely subject to the will or power of another. Moral consciousness, indeed, the consciousness of what we call selfhood, becomes possible to the creature only in so far as he is—not merely a physical or absolute subject, but—a *rational* subject, that is to say, so far as his life exhibits the procession of a certain spiritual *end*, through certain intellectual *means*, to a certain actual *result*. And a purely absolute creation, such as you presume to have taken place in Adam, defeats the possibility of such a subjectivity, and hence declares the moral experience of man, and *á fortiori* his spiritual experience, illusory.

The objection is very pregnant, and let me therefore leave no doubt upon my meaning. You hold, theologically, that at a certain time

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in the history of this earth, and at a certain place on its bosom, the Almighty by an exercise of His sovereign will or power, called Adam into being, so as that whereas at one moment he was not, the next moment beheld him a manifest form of life.

Now I say that the life of which Adam under these circumstances stood possessed, could only have been a physical life, or the life of the senses. He could only have been in other words the abject child of nature. Because moral life is inconceivable without rational experience, or the experience of a selfhood superior to his natural organization, and this experience is by the hypothesis effectually denied to Adam. He was created on the spot by the irresistible *fiat* of Deity, and manifestly his experience from minute to minute, and hour to hour, could only be an experience of sensation. The colors, the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the feels of nature, these constituted the world of his experience, and the consciousness of a selfhood, or of an interior and superior life, was simply impossible. Even if, as the hypothesis allows, he

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knew his Maker, he could only know Him as also subject to natural conditions, that is, as an object of sensible vision, or as a phenomenon of external Nature.

All this is certainly very plain, and requires no argument. But now upon these *data* how shall we account for the subsequent rise of man's moral history? Your reply is easy to be foreseen. You will doubtless say, that God laid a certain command on Adam, forbidding him to eat of a certain fruit on pain of death, and that the giving of the command constituted the beginning of his moral experience.

But this is entirely to mistake the constitution of morality. The giving of a command to man by no means makes him a moral agent, simply because it necessarily presupposes him one. Suppose that you should give a command to your horse or your cow: would either thereupon become a moral agent, and feel a sense of responsibility? Assuredly not. The giving a command supposes the object to whom it is addressed to be a person, not a chattel; that is, supposes the object to be already a moral agent;

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and it consequently no more confers moral power, than your bidding your child to look at the landscape confers eyes. Morality is not constituted by the obedience or disobedience of any command whatever, although it may manifest itself in both of these ways on occasion: just as man is not constituted by eating and drinking, though he habitually does both of these things. Morality is constituted by the subjection which a man is outwardly under to his own interior self. Deprive a man of self-mastery or the arbitrament of his own actions, that is, reduce him to slavery, and you destroy his morality. He may kill you, or do what he will towards you without reproach, because you have previously debauched his moral instincts, or robbed him of his moral growth, and consequently inaugurated purely brute relations between you. You have denied the man's power over his actions by reducing him to your subjection, and his subsequent conduct, whatsoever it be, legitimately dates therefore from that usurpation, or affiliates itself to you.

If then Adam were that absolute creature—

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that mere chattel—of God which you theologically represent him to have been, he was utterly destitute of moral power, and hence utterly incapable either of obeying or disobeying a divine command. You might with the same propriety talk of your ox or your ass obeying and disobeying you, as of Adam obeying and disobeying God under these circumstances. His relation to Deity is one of abject servility, excluding obedience and disobedience both, because rendering him incapable of drawing a moral breath. Thus of two things we must choose one. We must either deny that Adam was the creature of God's arbitrary will, of God's absolute power: or else we must insist that he was a purely physical, and by no means a moral, subject. We cannot allow the first proposition and disallow the second. For they are reciprocally implicated, or dependent. If Adam be the creature of God's sovereign or unlimited power, every phenomenon of his experience or history must strictly affiliate itself to God. Accordingly, if in this state of things God should lay a command upon Adam, Adam

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must be totally incapable either of keeping it or of violating it, since the hypothesis leaves him unconscious of any selfhood apart from his physical structure, and hence destitute of every basis for the conception of a moral conformity or a moral contrariety between himself and God.

You now perceive what I mean by saying that the hypothesis of an absolute creation on the part of Deity, or a creation which is its own end, necessarily leaves the creature destitute of freedom or rationality, and so turns our moral experience into an illusion. I can imagine no way in which you may evade this charge, unless you distinctly repudiate the current conception of the constitution of morality. Let me endeavor therefore briefly to illustrate and establish this conception.

Morality is popularly defined as the state or condition of free-agency, by which is meant the state or condition of a man who finds the law of his action exclusively within him and not without him. Outward sanctions or confirmations of this law no doubt exist, in the shape

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of rewards and punishments, but these things always remain sanctions, and therefore always presuppose the law. No amount of reward can make a man morally good, and no amount of punishment can make him morally evil. He alone is reputed a truly evil man, or a man inwardly evil, who derives the obligation of his conduct exclusively or even mainly from the outward sanctions of morality, that is to say, from the hope of reward or the fear of punishment. And on the other hand, he alone is reputed truly good, whose conduct is governed by higher considerations than those of mere outward prudence. Hence I repeat that outward sanctions or attestations to the law of moral obligation may exist to any extent, but they merely seal or ratify the law, and by no means constitute it. The law is inwardly constituted. Moral obligation dates exclusively from within the subject, and not from without him : otherwise he would not be a free agent. No agent is free who finds an outward authority constraining his activity. No agent is free whose responsibility is not primarily due to his own

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interior self. Let us take any moral precept for an example, and let it be, *thou shalt not steal.*

Our civil law does not originate this precept, nor even utter it ; it simply assumes it. It assumes the obligation of every man not to steal, and says, " whoso violates this obligation shall be punished thus and so." Now whence comes this obligation not to steal ? Whence does this precept—*thou shalt not steal*—derive its obligatoriness, that obligatoriness which makes it right for society to punish me whenever I steal ?

Clearly it is not derived from social convention. This is rendered obvious by the consideration, that society has no right *not* to punish me, that it is bound by the interests of its own existence to punish every violation of moral obligation : and our own agreement or convention is unnecessary to enforce the instincts of self-preservation. As clearly the obligation does not come from nature, for its office is to impose a continual restraint upon nature. Nature would be often exquisitely gratified by a sly in-

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fraction of moral obligation. If then the source of moral obligation do not lie either in social convention or in nature, we have exhausted the field of existence external to the subject, and nothing remains for us but to say, that the obligation in question has an exclusively inward source, or that it derives its force from something within the subject.

Such then is the constitution of morality. It denotes the power of an inward life in man, or supposes its subject to possess a selfhood superior to his physical endowments. It is the distinctive mark or expression of what we call selfhood, meaning thereby the miraculous power which man alone enjoys of acting independently of the control of his mere animal organization, and which accordingly no mere animal exhibits. And hence I say that if you make creation an outward, physical, and absolute act of God, or an act conditioned in time and space, you *ipso facto* deny morality to the creature, by denying him any consciousness above his physical conditions. You may make him a slave to the Creator, but a son never.

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"What!" you exclaim, "is not the will of God, then, the fountain of all morality?" I am far from questioning the truth of this proposition, properly understood. The total force of moral obligation is derived to us from the will of God. But what I beg of you to observe is, that the will of God means something very different from that absolute and arbitrary *fiat* which it is usually reported to mean. When we speak of the will of man, we mean something strictly proportionate to, and expressive of, his finite or imperfect character. And in like manner when we speak of the will of God, we mean something strictly proportionate to, and expressive of, His infinite or perfect character. So long as we regard God by the light of the orthodox philosophy, that is to say, as a virtual denizen of nature, or as a physical being constitutionally involving the elements of space and time, constitutionally involving in fact the intense totality of these elements,* then His will can never properly be regarded as the

* See Sir William Hamilton's criticism of Cousin, *Discussions, &c.*

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source of moral obligation to us. He might doubtless in that case be conceivably able to control our activity: but simply because the infinitude of His power would render such control absolute or irresistible, it is quite clear that our activity instead of being moral, would be purely mechanical and even unconscious. It could never by any possibility become moral under such a relation of Creator and creature, nor ever consequently characteristic of the subject. In fact under this state of things God's creature could never be properly deemed a subject of God. Because as subjection to any power, in proportion to the truth of the subjection, implies a strict ratio between the subject and the power, what possible ratio could be alleged to subsist between a being of perfect character, and one of no character at all?

Thus, if we view the will of God as constituting the true source of morality, it is evident that we must regard that will as purporting an inward or spiritual life for man. It will not do to view it as purporting to make man subject to any outward will or power, since, as we have

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seen, such a purpose must have perfectly defeated the possibility of moral existence. In short we must view the divine will in creation as expressing the divine perfection or character: and whatever that perfection or character legitimately implies in its creature, that alone we must suppose the divine will or power intent upon effecting.

You perceive then at last, my friend, that whatsoever right your own regenerate instincts give you to vindicate the divine justice from the assaults of infidelity, you have yet no right to attempt this vindication in the interests of the old theology. For even if you should succeed in the specific task you have undertaken, it is clear that your cosmology will still exhibit portentous gaps, which as a conscientious man you are bound not to overlook. Nay more. That cosmology is not only flagrantly at war with experience and reason, it is also as we have incidentally seen, at variance with the fundamental truth of Christianity. Hence your loyalty both as a man and a Christian binds you to disclaim it. For if Christianity have any clear

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meaning, it is the historical incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Yet your cosmology in making creation absolute, in making it primarily a phenomenon of space and time, supersedes and stultifies the historical incarnation, by making God *essentially* incarnate. According to the orthodox hypothesis God was incarnate *in se*, or before the world was. Else how could He have ordained the differences between day and night, between earth and sky, land and water, mineral and vegetable, animal and man, and pronounce them very good? And if God were incarnate *in se*, if He enjoyed the vision of external nature like man, then how can we possibly conceive of His *becoming* incarnate in the womb of the virgin? And if we can form no rational conception of this fact, which is nevertheless the initial fact of Christianity: if indeed our reason be compelled to regard the two facts as reciprocally contradictory: how irrational must be our conviction of the Christian verity! At the very least we shall have no title in that case to rank ourselves among those who, in the Lord's beautiful parable of the

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sower, are commended as receiving the truth "in an *understanding heart.*"

Rely upon it, my dear Sir, that the true "conflict of ages," the conflict of human pride with the infinite divine Mercy, can never be settled without a clear preliminary settlement of these cosmological difficulties; and for this settlement I have shown you that your theological position operates a complete disqualification. Infidelity, the only infidelity worth speaking of, the infidelity of the stupid natural heart, posits itself with perfect *aplomb* upon the moral instincts of man, or the instinct of an independent selfhood, and wages war upon Christianity as a divine Revelation, *precisely because Christianity assumes the insufficiency of those instincts to ally us with God.* If now your cosmology makes no provision for these instincts, if as I have proved it logically discredits their validity, by making man a purely physical existence, you surely cannot quarrel with Infidelity for renouncing that cosmology, and with it every Revelation which purports to authenticate it.

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I am amazed that so many sincere and sharp-eyed persons in your communion, should remain so persistently blind to the capital service which Orthodoxy incessantly renders to Infidelity. Infidelity is the gospel of the moral selfhood. Its mission is to celebrate "the knowledge of good and evil" as the true divine knowledge for man, or what is the same thing, to affirm the complete sufficiency of man to himself. Christ would have found it a very arduous, nay an utterly impracticable, endeavor to get crucified at the hands of men, provided he had come to preach any such gospel as this, the gospel of obedience to the moral instincts. Any Plato or any Confucius is quite capable of a mission so soft and a gospel so purely sentimental, and is quite sure moreover to reap the reward of a world-wide honor and acceptance. For these instincts are the inmost home and source—*magni amnis penetralia*—of human pride. Nothing affords us so exquisite a pleasure as their being adroitly flattered, nothing gives us so sharp an anguish as the effort to deplete or mortify them. A divine messenger would

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speedily prove accordingly the most popular and reputable of men, whose function lay mainly in that direction, or tended primarily to authenticate moral excellence. Witness Dr. Channing. Witness Fenelon. Witness all the persons who have been canonized by the Pharisaic reverence of the polite world. Such a messenger at all events Jesus Christ plainly was not. No polite world canonized *him*, until he had undergone an ecclesiastical "sea-change" which left no feature of his native splendor discernible. His name is now to be sure the apology for every tyranny, and the shield of every meanness. In that name our ecclesiastical potentates deride the progress of science, and defame God's great gift of reason; and by that name our sectarian editors seek every week and every month to consecrate their venal and truculent mendacities. But our inquiry relates wholly to the true and historic Jesus, whose mission implied, nay fully expressed, the complete Divine indifference to all that was highest and best in human society and human nature.

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Infidelity—and I beg you to remember that by that word I do not refer to any technical or conventional infidelity, but to that which is common to the universal heart of man, having its root in pride—infidelity discredits Christianity as a divine revelation, because Christianity puts no merit upon moral differences (or the differences which exist between one man and another) in the divine sight. Christianity denies that man viewed *in himself* exhibits any essential differences. It holds that all men, viewed in themselves, are alike evil in the divine sight, or alike dependent upon the sheer mercy of God, the morally good man as well as the morally evil, the angel Gabriel quite as much as the man possessed of seven devils. It declares that when God looked upon the earth he saw all men a prey to the lusts of evil, and incapable of self-extrication. It declares that a universal spiritual death reigned over man, even in those cases where there had been no actual transgression, and that in this state of things God manifested Himself in human flesh, that thus he might experience and

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overcome the temptations of Evil, and so restore man's lost spiritual freedom to him. The gospel is thus a record of a signal divine mercy to all mankind, without distinction, and it beseeches all mankind, without distinction, by the belief of this mercy to be reconciled to God.

It is easy to see that the morally good man, or the man who is favorably distinguished in men's eyes from other men, may naturally be affronted by so indiscriminate an invitation. He has a great belief in natural religion, because natural religion authenticates the *essential* distinction of the good and evil man. And he very much doubts, therefore, whether a religion which does not flatter that distinction, or which makes it of no account as a procuring cause of the divine mercy, can be deemed a true revelation from God. The gospel of the divine mercy, the gospel of the great redemption achieved by Jesus Christ in the interests of universal man, has accordingly fared very badly at the hands of the polite world. It has got itself patronized only by losing all its na-

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tive savor and majesty, only by becoming an émasculate and puling reproduction of natural religion. The church, in other words, instead of promoting or even maintaining the quarrel of Jesus with human pride, has invariably done its best to conciliate the latter interest, by representing Jesus as the stanch friend and patron of "whatsoever is highly esteemed among men." When Christ was on the earth, he knew no enemy but the Pharisee, or the man who trusted in himself that he was righteous and despised others. Now that he has ascended to heaven, and above the heaven of heavens, no class of persons appear so studious of his honor, or build such stately monuments to his fame. Thus the simple method which orthodoxy takes to subdue the enmity of the polite world to Jesus, consists in reducing him to the dimensions of a Socrates, or in eviscerating his doctrine of its total divine contents. In this way the Christian Church has grown to be the synonym of worldliness, and the home of every degree and shade of infidelity. In this way Hegel's philosophy has come to announce itself

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with consummate audacity as the fulfilment of Christianity, and every subsequent obscene offspring of the night emulates the unconscious blasphemy. This result has been as inevitable as, in a superficial view of the case, it is deplorable. It has grown out of a mistaken ambition on the part of the leaders of the Church, to endow Christ with "a kingdom of this world." The true dignity of the Church has always resided in its facts or traditions, and not in any speculative justification of these things: as in the facts or traditions of the divine creation and providence, of the universal corruption of man, of the manifestation of God in flesh, of the conquest of evil, and the redemption of mankind from its power. The moment it attempts to philosophize upon these traditions, or convert them from historical facts into truths of the reason, it falls at once into the bottomless pit of naturalism. A strictly logical necessity in other words binds it to begin with St. Augustine, and end in the thinnest void of Hegelianism. I am perfectly aware of course that no protest against Feuerbach and Max Stirner,

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could be urged with more conscious sincerity than that which should issue from our various ecclesiastical schools, as Oxford and Edinburgh, Andover and New Haven. The reason is obvious. No plant loves to see itself running to seed, and the protests in question mark only the instinctive repugnance which the trunk and branches of our old ecclesiastical tree feel, to being swallowed up in this consummate and exhaustive flower.

But I am anticipating. I have still many things to say concerning your book, or the nature of its argument.

The aim of the book is to prove God "just and honorable" in condemning the sinner. This is a desirable work, no doubt, wherever extremely carnal or sensuous conceptions of the divine character prevail. It is of great moment to one who believes God literally capable of inflicting injury on his own dependent offspring, to become persuaded that He never does so except from upright motives. Because, as you have freely reasoned, the person would otherwise be impelled by his divinest instincts to hate God.

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This is a step in advance then, but it is by no means the great or final step. The great step is to demonstrate the *existence* of sin. The final step, the step which alone gives relief to the cultivated understanding, is not to perceive God just in condemning and punishing evil, but to perceive the very existence of evil in the universe compatible with the infinitude or perfection of God. There are multitudes of devout and refined persons like yourself, who would deem the dread of ever encountering hostile demonstrations at the hands of Deity, inexpressibly base and loathsome; but who are still profoundly perplexed with the problem of human freedom, in its higher bearings. It is small comfort to such minds to hear that God is just in condemning evil. Once no doubt this had been very acceptable news. But now they know full well that God is just and good whatsoever He does, since He is God in fact only by virtue of these things. What it perplexes them to know therefore is, how evil in the creature can coexist with this goodness, or how, in other words, separation between the infinite source of

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life and His dependent creatures, could have ever taken place.

You represent the philosophic quest to be: *how can God be just in condemning and punishing evil?* whereas the true quest is: *how can evil even so much as get existence under the government of perfect goodness, of infinite wisdom?* You assume the existence of evil, and the strictly vindictive attitude of God towards it; and all that you feel concerned to postulate in the premises is, that this attitude of His be demonstrably just. The philosophic inquirer, on the other hand, is not at all concerned to prove God just in His dealings towards the evil, for the Divine perfections take care of themselves. He is simply concerned to prevent the obscuration of those perfections by the anterior fact of the origination or existence of evil. In short, your investigation is urged in the interests of a certain ecclesiasticism; his, in the interests of universal humanity. You are afraid that unless we prove the damnation of the wicked to be just on the part of God, an intellectual revolt against orthodox creeds and

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standards must rightfully ensue on the part of all good men. He, on the other hand, is only afraid lest the supreme truth of the Divine existence or perfection suffer damage, from the existence of evil in the universe of creation.

It appears to me that the very remarkable phraseology you employ throughout your work, in relation to the presumed obligation of the Creator to consult the creature's "ideas of honor and right," might alone have suggested to your mind, my dear sir, that there was something radically vicious in your attitude towards all this question. For consider the facts. Man according to your own belief is the unlimited creature of God: he derives his total being from God: he has no faculty of affection, thought, or action which he does not derive exclusively from God. Yet you do not hesitate to suppose a state of things, in which this dependent creature may become capable of sitting in judgment upon his great original, and of determining whether or not his Maker's acts are conformable to the rules of honor and right!

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Pray tell me then, where does man get his ideas of honor and right from? Has he any ideas upon these or any other subjects which are underived, which have a genesis in himself independently of the Divine fountain? Are not all his ideas of honor and right derived exclusively from God? How is it conceivable therefore, that a relation should ever obtain between this affluent fountain and this strictly dependent stream, which should qualify the latter to become a judge of the former? Is not the total life of the latter *in* the former? In case the former therefore should become vicious in its efflux, would the latter remain sweet and capable of contrasting it? How palpably absurd to conceive of such a possibility, and how fundamentally vicious must every intellectual system be which logically includes or generates such preposterous speculative tests.

You talk incessantly of the "obligations of the Creator to every new-created mind," of the "claims of new-created minds," of the "rights of new-created beings," &c., &c. But if words have any meaning, moral or personal

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obligation is derived to the subject only from his own inward being or character. And if God be under obligation to His creature, the obligation is imposed of course by the necessity of His own perfection. It is very absurd to talk of the creature's rights or claims as derived from himself. For he is the unlimited creature of another, he is nothing that is not derived from another; and hence he has no "claim" or "right" underived from that other. His claim upon the Creator is that he should image that Creator's perfection, nothing more and nothing less. This claim is involved in the bare statement of creatureship, because the Creator cannot beget a true creature out of his own image. The stream cannot transcend its source, and if the Creator be good therefore, the creature will be good without any sense of merit, or if the Creator be evil, the creature will be evil without any sense of demerit.

To talk accordingly of the Creator being under any obligation to the creature, underived from His own essential perfection, is to talk very unworthily of your own excellent sense. You

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might with equal propriety talk of the obligation the potter is under to the clay, or the sculptor to the marble. The potter and the sculptor feel no doubt the obligation of their own genius, of their own skill, but they would be unaffectedly scandalized to find the clay and the marble taking the floor, and putting forth their extremely original views of plastic Art. The earthen pitcher and the marble statue both say to their maker, "be true to your own genius, to your own great ideas, to your own sense of the useful and the beautiful, and then fashion us as you will, for we are simply your pliant servants to be moulded at your pleasure." So the true creature of God has no "claim" or "right" to be any thing but what his Creator's perfection designs him to be. With his hand on his mouth, and his mouth in the dust of self-abasement, he tacitly says: "Be true to thine own infinite goodness, and fashion me as Thou wilt, for thine I am and not my own, to image and reflect Thee through all the cycles of my endless being. This is is the sole guarantee of my eternal happiness, that Thou wilt

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not allow me to fashion myself, but wilt consult only thine own boundless mercy, making me as the pliant and rejoicing clay in the hands of the potter."

But now looking at your book by the light of its own principles wholly, is it at all conclusive? Let us see.

The purpose of the book is to furnish a new Theodicy, or a new mode of vindicating the Divine justice in the condemnation of the sinner. Why is a new mode necessary? Because the old mode is confessedly infirm, and refuses to bear the scrutiny of enlightened reason. This old mode for example, exhibits the sinner coming into the world already deflected from the path of rectitude, strongly predisposed by his very nature to evil, and then exhibits God taking vengeance upon him for yielding to this deflection, for obeying this predisposition. Obviously therefore this old mode should be got rid of at all hazards, as a flagrant abomination to the moral sense. But what is the new and humaner method which shall replace it? It consists in antedating the beginnings of human

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history, or in imagining a period of existence for man long prior to his present consciousness, in which every one stood upon his own individual legs, and not upon any natural or common basis with other men, and so standing forfeited the Divine favor. Thus our present life instead of being an original creation, is merely a reprieve, to allow certain of those who before forfeited the Divine favor, the opportunity of redeeming it by repentance and faith in Christ. And thus our verdurous and glowing planet is turned into a spent-ball merely, a ricochet-shot, a life whose aphelion is so dread and dismal and utter, as to fling its perihelion beyond the remotest verge of human memory.

It is fair to say that this hypothesis promises at a first glance to relieve the Calvinistic orthodoxy of its most odious feature. For the Calvinist may now say, God does not condemn and punish the sinner for yielding to his natural biasses. These biasses are themselves only the fossil remainders or *exuviæ* of pre-historic experiences, in which we lived and acted each for his own independent self, and so living and

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acting, became the indurated and inspissated mass of sin our nature now proclaims us to be. It was then that our condemnation took place, and only on the ground of our individual forfeiture of the Divine image; and the reason why punishment did not instantly follow condemnation was, that God's mercy provided a respite by which all those who pleased might repent of their misconduct, become renewed in his image, and live.

Unhappily, however, at a second glance this hypothesis presents an insuperable difficulty even to its Calvinistic client, which is that it is an hypothesis *only*. That which proves a very dainty crutch for the theologic invalid, may easily turn out a pure embarrassment to the unsophisticated inquirer. What the latter wants to know is, not how things *might* have been better than they seem: this is readily enough conceivable: but how they actually *are* better. And on this point unfortunately the hypothesis gives him no satisfaction. It enables him to say, "*if* things were thus and thus," but not that they actually were thus and thus.

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For the hypothesis is destitute of the slightest historic attestation, save of that cheap sort which any solicitous advocate may coax out of any facts in support of any cause. And if the hypothesis were true, it is incredible that the same mercy which provided us a respite so gracious, should not have shed one ray of infallible light upon those precedent facts, which must have so strongly commended that respite to our devout attention. The most the hypothesis permits us to say, is, "that peradventure in times immemorial things proceeded after another fashion:" and man happily in his Godward plight rejects the guidance of peradventures, craving that only of solid certainties.

But to the general mind the hypothesis is simply nugatory, as being incapable of advancing the controversy one jot. What people in general wish to know is, not how God may justly condemn evil, but how the opportunity either for condemning or pardoning it arises under His perfect administration. They have no very active sympathy with the specific Cal-

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vinistic perplexity on the subject, being shrewdly suspicious that this perplexity grows out of the foolish habit of groping in dark corners, unsunned by the common light of reason. In fact I apprehend that the mass of people hail the avowal of this perplexity on the part of so respectable a person as yourself, as a grateful evidence of the growing power of divine truth in quarters which have hitherto seemed extremely unpropitious to it. But however this may be, it is undeniable that the general mind feels a far profounder solicitude than this, and that is, as I have already said, to reconcile the bare existence of evil with the acknowledged supremacy of the Divine perfection. You do indeed incidentally glance at the question of the origin of evil, towards the close of your work, with a view to conciliate acquiescence in your hypothesis of pre-existence. But the account you give of it is so extremely lax and superficial, that I am sure your best-disposed readers must have perceived the wrong you were doing, not merely to the general subject, but to your own specific interest even. For

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the plain purpose and labor of your book is to vindicate the Divine character from those cruel aspersions to which it is subject from the orthodox theories of innate depravity. The orthodox theory presents God in an eternally condemnatory and punitive relation towards the sinner, even while proving the sinner to have been predisposed and predetermined to sin, by his very nature and all the circumstances operative upon it. You very properly reject this theory as diabolic, because it reflects a boundless discredit upon the Divine character. But now how is it with the theory you substitute? Does this theory mend matters on the whole? Let us see.

The reason why men are condemned, is, according to the new theory, not because they have sinned, being tempted or overborne by an evil nature, but because they have sinned without such temptation, each on his own original motion. Now it is clear that we have here a very valid reason for God's vindictiveness, unless we should be so unlucky as to find an equally valid one for man's previous sinfulness.

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But *this, unfortunately, you immediately proceed to supply*, in your account of the origin of evil.

Your account is, "That evil arises out of *a temporary limitation of the Divine power* in the earlier stages of His system, in consequence of the NECESSARY LIABILITY *of finite minds to unbelief and distrust of God*, when exposed to the *inevitable* trials which pertain to an infinite system such as befits God, and in which alone He can properly act out Himself."—p. 475. Again, on the same page: "There is a temporary limitation of Divine power, *originating from the limitation of finite capacities to comprehend God and His ways, and a consequent* liability in the first generations of creatures to unbelief, distrust, and sin." And then, as if this were not enough, you immediately proceed to say on the next page: "This limitation of God's power does not diminish but increases our ideas of the greatness of God: for *His greatness is the cause of the limitation in question.* It is merely the inability of an infinite mind to bring itself and its plans down to the

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level of a finite mind." "When once these things are well considered, they disclose a satisfactory reason for the origin of evil, and one not dishonorable to God, for *to annihilate the infinite distance between Himself and a creature is not in his power.* He must act according to His own greatness, and yet under the limitations created by an utter impossibility of transmitting into a finite mind a full knowledge of all that exists in an infinite one. Hence if He will act with finite minds on an infinite plan, *He must act at least in the earlier generations, with a necessary liability of being misunderstood; and if* HIS WAYS ARE TRYING, *of losing the confidence of those with whom He acts.*"—p. 477.

Far be it from me to question the amiable feeling which underlies all these extracts. Your desire and intention unquestionably are to vindicate the Divine Providence: but it is equally unquestionable, that you practically cover it with the foulest opprobrium. I am surprised that an intelligence so well affected to the truth, and at the same time so circumspect as

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your own, should not have seen the fatal infirmity of your suggestions on this subject—I will not say in point of philosophy, but in regard to your own immediate purpose. You indeed cleanse the skirts of the Divine procedure with respect to sin in this world: but with respect to that former world, or with respect to the original introduction of sin, you leave them, nay you make them, crimson red. In fact, the red under your showing runs incontinently over into black. For God is here declared the author of sin, with an emphasis never to be exceeded. It is made to be a necessary fruit of His very perfection even. "Evil grows out of a temporary limitation of the Divine power:" and a power which is limited, or incapable of seconding its subject's intention, is evidently imperfect or finite. It is true that you seek to qualify the statement by saying that this limitation of the Divine power "originates from the limitation of finite capacities to comprehend God and His ways;" but this only confirms the stigma. For these capacities, whence were they derived? The creature was

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not self-made, either as to his capacities or his faculties. He is the creature of God: and you would not make God attribute the limitation of His power to His own creature, would you? The potter might say of the clay that it was poor, and lent itself imperfectly to his design in any given case, without disparagement to his own power; because he does not stand in a *creative* relation to the clay. But man, by the hypothesis, is the absolute creature of God, and hence it is simply absurd to suppose him limiting the Divine power. How can an absolute creature limit the power which creates him? Before that power was exercised in his creation, he was not; and to say, therefore, that he offered any obstruction to its exercise, is merely to contradict yourself. You might as well say that the house which the mason built would not allow itself to be well built; or that the tub which the cooper made would not permit the cooper to make it properly. Man is, by the hypothesis, the offspring of the Divine power exclusively, and hence, whatever limitations he exhibits are legitimate expressions of

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the limitation of that power. He is limited because the power is limited, and not *vice versa*. For the creature did not exist before he was created. He was not prior to himself. God alone was prior to him. If, therefore, the Divine power encountered limitation in making him, clearly he himself was irresponsible. He might be a good witness of the limited power which created him, but with no propriety of speech could be regarded as the cause of such limitation. He was nothing that he was not made, and the power that made him had no conceivable ground of quarrel with him consequently for being what he was.

Accordingly whatever disabilities the orthodox Calvinistic system labors under, it is very evident, my dear sir, that your modification of that system promises no improvement. For how can God, consistently with any principles of honor and right, condemn and punish a creature of His own for those limitations of his nature which lead him to sin, when it is evident that these limitations logically and necessarily flow as you have said from God's own greatness?

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If an infinite mind is so great that it cannot bring itself down to the capacity of a finite one; and if this finite mind through this incapacity on the part of the infinite, is, as you allege, "necessarily liable to distrust, rebellion and sin;" then it appears to me that we have a clear case of misfortune made out, but certainly no case of guilt. We may compassionate the finite element, we surely cannot condemn it. We should say, it is hard enough that you should have been rendered subject to this incapacity; it is totally intolerable that you should also be damned and punished for it. Especially would this be intolerable on the part of Him whose very greatness is the source of your incapacity. It would be in that case the quintessence of deviltry.

I cordially believe, my dear sir, that you would renounce these logical fruits of your own theology quite as sincerely as I should. I merely point them out to your attention, to prove how great the necessity is for a further revision of that theology. On every page of your book I recognize an affection which is

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better than knowledge, which must eventually endow its possessor indeed with all knowledge; and in respect to the identical point at issue between us, it is easy to see that it is a certain faint crepuscle of truth in combination with the error you uphold, which softens or irradiates the features of the latter, and makes them tolerable. You dimly see that God's power in creation is not lawless or absolute, since, as I have abundantly shown, there could in that case be no sin nor any righteousness on the part of the creature. And seeing this, you endeavor to evade the current cosmology which, by giving Him an absolute power over the creature, makes him responsible for the creature's lapse into sin. To be sure, the way in which you construct this evasion brings you logically, as we have seen, to the same deadly result. But the will is there, which is the main thing, and the logic will not be long in overtaking it. The walls of your theologic dungeon are visibly rending under the might of a struggle so manly and sincere; already great chinks appear, letting in the sounds and sights

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of cheerful nature: one or two hearty efforts more, and you will stand face to face with the full-orbed and kingly day. Already you suspect what God's power is not. It remains for you clearly to see what it *is*. You dimly perceive that it is not an *absolute* power, which is the power of making THINGS: it remains for you to see that it is exclusively a rational power, which is the power of making PERSONS. The reason why you do not see this thing plainly, and at once, is, that you do not quarrel with the old cosmology as philosophy, but only as history, and that you go on to assert even in respect to your former world, the same old absolute creation on the part of God. That is to say, you make creation at the new historical epoch, to have been just as truly as ever a mere phenomenon of space and time, or an exertion of physical power on the part of God. And so long as creation remains of this type, it is impossible that it should not be strictly absolute, and therefore irrational and unintelligible, reflecting with unerring servility the naked will or power of Deity, and excluding the bare con-

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ception of freedom or power on the part of the creature.

With this idea of creation accordingly, it is idle to struggle after any mere historical confirmation of it. It is not history we lack, it is understanding. In other words, your whole trouble lies in the very substance of your thought itself; since you cogitate a creation which logically excludes every phenomenon of moral or characteristic life, and refers their subsequent introduction therefore, if such introduction take place, not to an inherent or dynamic provision of the system, but to some external and mechanical necessity. Thus having no spiritual and positive conception of creation, and yet foreseeing that if God's power over the creature be absolute He cannot be freed from the complicity of evil, what do you do? Boldly deny the absoluteness of that power, and affirm instead its strict rationality? By no means. You content yourself with finding its limitation in the infirmity of the creature, as if the artist could be deemed great whose work pronounces him mean. Surely God

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is self-inhibited any absolute power over His own creature, is inhibited by his own perfection. His own uncreated perfection prevents him creating any thing which shall be life in itself, since this would be to create God, and limits him accordingly to the creation of mere organs or subjects of life. And these subjects or organs consequently must receive the Divine life freely, or in a rational manner, because if that life were seen to be forced upon them, the inference would be inevitable that they were not creatures of God, that they had in them some life of their own, by the inspiration of which they were empowered to reject the divine life. In this way freedom and rationality are seen to belong to the very constitution of creation, as reflecting the uncreated perfection of Deity, and we are absolved consequently from all necessity to find them in the imperfection of the creature.

Your instinct accordingly is doubtless warm with piety, while at the same time it is destitute of intelligence, since God's own perfection is sufficient to explain every fact in the history

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of creation, without any disparagement to the creature himself. It is not reverence, but only our native ignorance of the grandeurs of that perfection, which leads us to seek the realm of universal causation in any subsequent and inferior agency. But before we enter fully upon this theme, allow me a few more words of friendly expostulation.

Your habit of cogitating creation as an absolute work of God, or a work in some sense of God's unlimited power, disposes you to deny the possibility of any *ratio* being found between Creator and creature. Creation being a work of God's absolute power, and hence purely arbitrary and irrational, of course the relation between Creator and creature must always reflect this irrationality or absoluteness. Absolutely of course there is no ratio given. One is all life *in se*, the other all death *in se*. One is fountain, the other stream. In this point of view it may be said that an impassable chasm intervenes between the two. God cannot create life, or that which lives of itself, because this would be to create Himself. He creates only

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subjects, or recipient forms of life, into which He may flow and communicate His own blessedness. This is unquestionably true, and cannot be too earnestly enforced. But let us be very careful how we go beyond this. If we say for example with your book, "that such being the essential distance between God and man, God himself cannot clear it," we pointedly contradict the gospel. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ professes to be a revelation of this sublime fact, that the infinite God has perfectly abridged the distance between Himself and His creature; has perfectly and for ever annihilated the separation between His own immaculate purity and the profoundest consciousness of sin; so that we recognize Him henceforth only as a glorified natural man, or as one who, having been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, is cordially touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and freely offers Himself therefore as an all-sufficient refuge to the chief of sinners. This is the grand distinction of Christianity above all other religions, that it reveals the dread and immaculate Jeho-

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vah stooping to mortal conditions, clothing Himself with shame and suffering as with a garment, in order that He might as a subject of our nature redeem it from the corruption of evil, and so exalt it into an eternal union with Himself. Philosophy unillumined by the gospel may fitly say, as you have said, "that the greatness of God and the necessary limitation of the highest created minds, render it impossible for God fully to disclose either Himself or His plans to them." Philosophy instructed only by the senses may say, "that God *must ever act in view of considerations unseen and unknown to created minds*, and that it is not in His power to annihilate the infinite distance between Himself and a creature." All this is the honest and veracious judgment of a carnal philosophy, or a philosophy compounded of the elements of this world's knowledge, and as such I have no quarrel with it.

But you, my dear sir, are a minister of the gospel, and are entitled therefore to a more ele vated philosophy. Revelation affords Philosophy a higher stand-point, and enables it in dis-

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using its childish prattle to discourse more wisely and worthily of the Divine power. Revelation places God's greatness precisely where an uninstructed Philosophy discovers His littleness, namely, in the fact of His ability perfectly to disclose Himself and His plans to the most unsophisticated intelligence. It exhibits Him always "acting in view of considerations *perfectly intelligible* to created minds," and declares the open mystery of the gospel to be His complete "manifestation in the flesh," or what is obviously the same thing, His total abolition of the infinite distance between Himself and His creature. Herein Revelation claims an immense advantage over Philosophy, and irresistibly commends itself to the human heart. For what man would not rather acknowledge an intelligible Deity than an unintelligible one? In giving us an apathetic Deity, or one whose greatness is fitly measured by the worshipper's ignorance, Philosophy gives us a melodramatic and spurious Divinity, a sort of infinite lord Byron in fact, vain of the work He once achieved no doubt, but insufferably sick

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of the cockney creatures whose admiration goes to feed that vanity. Revelation on the contrary gives us the true Divinity, whose greatness towers in the exact ratio of His creature's intimate knowledge of Him. It is all very well for the philosopher to exhaust God of His human pith and meaning, and reduce Him to an ineffable abstraction pendent in some ethereal and viewless limbo: because the philosopher quite possibly cherishes certain divine designs of his own towards the universe, certain schemes of universal law and order, which a more vital Divinity might easily impinge. But the vast and wholesome mass of mankind delight to humanize Deity, and to refer the control of the universe to an infinitely good, wise and powerful Man, who alone is God.

But it is time to pause, and listen to your own reasonable inquiries. You will properly demand to know what conception I myself entertain of the Divine power as manifested in creation, or how I should proceed to prove the existence of evil compatible with the sovereignty of infinite Goodness. And certainly unless

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I had hoped to give a satisfactory answer to questions like these, it would have been undesirable, if not inexcusable, to invite public attention to a mere criticism of your book. At the same time I have not the least idea that the account I am going to give of the matter, will obviate all cavil. For the evil whose origin we are seeking, is not a phenomenon of sense, but a purely spiritual condition, affecting a man's relations to God, and therefore requiring culture or discipline to recognize it. The erudition which the problem exacts belongs more to the heart than the head, and the only doctorate it confers is upon the regenerate man. Thus though one may furnish an unexceptionable scientific statement of the question, or weld its logic into an irrefragable chain, he can only hope to carry conviction to the prepared mind, the mind which has been spiritually quickened and disciplined, whether nominally Christian or heathen, infidel or believing. If I were writing a treatise upon some political problem, mere logic might do the business. For all purely scientific truth appeals to the material interests

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of man, or finds its ratification not in the sentiment of brotherly love or charity, but in that of self-love. And hence what a man needs in order to his recognizing it, is not so much spiritual culture, or discipline of the heart, as intellectual culture, or discipline of the head. From the nature of the case, religious truth is destitute of this advantage. Aiming primarily to advance a man's immortal or spiritual interests, and his material ones quite subordinately, it rejects so simple an appeal as that to the instinct of self-love alone, and seeks to be authenticated chiefly by the sentiment of brotherly love, which is the instinct of a higher life.

However we need not be detained by reflections of this nature. Let me proceed at once to give as orderly an account as I can of those laws of the Divine creation which permit the origination of evil in the creature, without involving any disparagement to the Divine perfection.

When we speak of inquiring into the origin of evil, we do not mean *physical* evil, or the evil which one SUFFERS: nor *moral* evil, or the

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evil which one DOES: but *spiritual* evil, or the evil which one IS.

Physical and moral evil, like physical and moral good, are constitutional facts with man. They originate in the necessities of our finite nature, or inhere in our animal and rational organization. Physical evil is merely a negative attestation of the limitation which the animal subject is under to nature, or the external world. Moral evil is only a negative attestation of the limitation and dependence which the rational subject is under to society, or his fellow-man. They are completely normal facts, originating in the necessities of our physical and social existence, and there is consequently no obscurity attaching to them. When a man suffers from hunger, or the lack of any necessary of life, which are instances of physical evil, I perceive that his suffering grows out of his animal organization, or the dependence he is constitutionally under to his voluntary action for the supply of the necessaries of life. Expose the vegetable to similar suffering, and it will die, while the animal is only stimulated by

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it to his proper or distinctive life. He suffers only because some outward impediment exists to the ordinary supply of his wants, calling for some extraordinary exertion of activity on his part : and I cannot conceive of his being animally organized at all without a liability to suffer under similar circumstances. So also when the same man steals my purse or filches from me my good name, which are instances of moral evil, I perceive that this evil grows out of his rational organization, or the constitutional freedom he enjoys to act in any given case according to his own conceptions of duty and interest. Nor can I conceive of his being rationally constituted without such freedom. The intellect consequently has no quarrel with the existence of either physical or moral evil. They are possibilities and potentialities inherent in the very nature of man, or his finite constitution, and if accordingly any one be disposed to quarrel, he must quarrel exclusively with this latter fact. As long as he admits the fact of man's finite nature, or of his physical and rational existence, he also admits by necessary

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implication the existence of evil as well as good, and it is only by denying the former fact that he logically excludes the latter.

And if any one be disposed to urge this irrational denial, it suffices to reply that there is no way of avoiding a finite constitution on our part short of making ourselves Divine. We are finitely constituted, simply because our being is not infinite, simply because we are creatures of God in place of being God Himself. We must therefore consent either to be finite or to be nothing. If my being were underived or independent, if like God I possessed life in myself, then indeed I should be destitute of a finite nature or constitution. But as my being is wholly derivative and dependent upon the Divine perfection, so my existence or formal development must be purely relative or conditional. That is to say it must exhibit certain *boundaries*, or present the equilibrium of two opposing forces. Finite existence is bounded or limited existence, and the things which bound or limit it, are what *constitute* the existence, or give it development to its own intelli-

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gence. Thus the boundaries of animal life are pleasure and pain, health and disease, plenty and want. Destroy these boundaries, that is to say, make the animal insensible to pleasure and pain, and you destroy him as animal. They are laws of the animal constitution, so that to the extent in which you impair their force, or what is the same thing, impair his subjection to them, you at the same time impair his constitution, and destroy the animal life.

The boundaries of moral life are duty and interest, or brotherly love and self-love. There is no morality possible which is not contingent upon this bipolarity, or transacted within these limitations. It is the balance, or equal pressure, of these opposing forces upon man which constitutes him a moral subject, or makes him responsible for his own actions. Consequently if you destroy this bipolarity, if you do away with the antagonism of brotherly love and self-love, you destroy or do away with man's moral constitution. You deny him selfhood or moral consciousness. For inasmuch as he has no absolute selfhood or consciousness, because he has

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no life *in se*, he must necessarily have a conditional one ; and if, therefore, you deny the conditions upon which such selfhood or consciousness proceeds, you deny *a fortiori* the latter phenomenon itself. His selfhood, whether animal or moral, posits itself simply as the middle, third, or neutral term of two opposing poles or forces : and this by the sheer necessity of the case, or because his being is derivative. When therefore you vacate these constitutional conditions or limits of the animal and moral selfhood or life, you necessarily vacate this selfhood or life also.

I repeat then that good and evil, and pleasure and pain, are facts which fall within the strictly constitutional plane of human life, and hence do not supply the conception of spiritual evil, or that which separates the soul from God. For example, there is no man living who is not constitutionally liable to falsehood, to theft, to adultery, to murder, and to covetousness. Some persons doubtless are *peculiarly* liable by nature to some of these evils, and other persons *peculiarly* liable to others. But no persons are

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absolutely exempt from such natural liability, on the presence of temptation, unless they are either physically or mentally diseased. So on the other hand there is no person of average physical and mental health, who is not constitutionally liable to gentleness, kindness, patience, generosity, magnanimity, on the presentation of adequate motives. Some persons are by nature doubtless peculiarly susceptible to these emotions, or to some of them, and others to others: but no person is absolutely void of such susceptibility, provided a sufficient motive be exhibited. Hence we are not inwardly or spiritually chargeable with this good and evil: they are common to the race of men, and we are consequently forbidden to make any individual appropriation of them. They are simply features of our physical and rational organization, not of our internal or spiritual creation, and we cannot identify ourselves with them consequently, or place our happiness in them, without damage and affront to the latter interest.

The sole curse of man, indeed, from the be-

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ginning, has consisted in his obstinately "eating of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil," or attributing to himself the good and the evil, which are in truth only the indispensable conditions of his spiritual manifestation, or self-consciousness. The conceit of one's finite endowments, or the attribution to one's self of the good and the evil, by whose antagonism that self is vivified or constituted, is original sin, is the origin of all the sin which afflicts humanity. This alone is spiritual evil, the only evil known to the spiritual universe, namely, self-sufficiency, and the consequent renunciation of God from the life. But let us, in a summary manner, run over the laws of the divine creation, which, by necessitating man's freedom, incidentally permit the introduction of this evil.

And first, supposing creation, as we are bound to do by our reverence for the creative Perfection, a strictly rational procedure, involving the due adjustment of means to ends, and of both to effects, let us inquire what is the divine end in creation? And here a very competent student shall supply the answer.

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"The universal end, or the end of all things, in creation," says Swedenborg, "is, that there may be an eternal conjunction of the Creator with the created universe, and this end would be impracticable, unless there be subjects in which His divine may be as in itself, consequently in which it may dwell and remain. Now these subjects, in order to become God's habitation and mansion, must receive His love and wisdom *as of themselves* (that is *freely*); consequently they must be such as to elevate themselves to the Creator as of their own power, and become conjoined with Him: without this reciprocation no conjunction can be effected. These subjects are men who are able to elevate and conjoin themselves as of their own power. By this conjunction the Lord is present in every work created from Himself, since every created thing is finally for the sake of man; wherefore the uses of all things which are created ascend gradually from ultimates to man, and through man to God the creator, their original source."

Now evidently in this state of things, that

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is supposing man to be a creature, and therefore void of life *in se*, the condition of his subjectivity or self-consciousness is a balance or equilibrium of two extremes. Being, by the fact of his creatureship, destitute of absolute existence or consciousness, he is necessarily restricted to a finite or contingent one, and the condition of this finite existence, of this contingent consciousness, is the antagonism of pleasure and pain, good and evil, light and darkness, truth and falsity. All finite consciousness is conditioned upon the antagonism of good and evil. But *moral* consciousness, or the consciousness of a selfhood superior to one's physique, implies not merely the antagonism of these extremes, but also their strict equilibrium. Moral life supposes not merely the opposition between good and evil, truth and falsity, but also the exact balance of these opposing forces. I can love nothing, think nothing, will nothing, do nothing, save in so far as I disturb this static equilibrium, that is to say, save in so far as I give one of the moral poles, the negative or positive one, a supre-

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macy over the other. And if that supremacy already existed prior to my action, of course the action would be superseded or stifled in its birth. Thus all personal, moral, or characteristic action constitutionally involves a process of elimination or rejection, involves the putting away of evil in order to the doing of good, and *vice versa*. Such is the invariable genesis of morality. No man is good save by the overcoming of evil; no man wise save by the subjugation of falsity; no man learned save by the conquest of ignorance. I cannot do good save in so far as I cease to do evil; I cannot follow truth save in so far as I avert myself from falsity; I cannot choose black tea save by the simultaneous rejection of green. The equilibrium of these extremes is what pronounces the action mine, or makes it possible. Suppose the equilibrium destroyed, that is to say, suppose a man born with some moral disease, as a proclivity to theft for example, amounting as it does in some known cases to a mania: you acquit the person to that extent of responsibility, or deny that his action is char-

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acteristic. You put the subject in a hospital, not in a prison, and treat him with preventions instead of penalties.

Now all this flows from the truth of man's creatureship. Simply because man is the creature of God, he can have no claim to an absolute, but only to a *quasi* or conditional selfhood. The rule upon the subject may be stated thus: *God is inhibited* BY HIS OWN PERFECTION *from giving an absolute selfhood* to His creature: or what is the same thing, *from creating a being who shall be independent of Himself.* This disability God derives from His own perfection, or from the fact that He is life in Himself. Because He is life in Himself, He cannot create any thing which shall be life in itself, since this would be to create God, and so contradict His own uncreated being. Thus, by reason of His own uncreated perfection, God can only create *forms* or *subjects* of life, to which forms or subjects He may eternally *communicate* life by continually conjoining them more and more to Himself, but not otherwise. In other words, simply because God is life in

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Himself, His creature cannot possibly be any thing more than a receptive form or subject of life.* Were the creature any thing more than a recipient form of life, his creation must have implied the impartation of God's own being to Him, and the consequent diminution to that extent of God Himself: so that a perfect creation, or one which should be commensurate with the perfection of the Divine Love, must, under this aspect of the question, have proved tantamount to the ultimate utter absorption and extinction of Deity. I repeat, therefore, that by the very necessity of God's own perfection His creature can never be any thing more than a recipient form or subject of life, can never be life itself.

* Were God to create a being which could possibly exist or act independently of Himself, He would manifestly cease to be a creator the moment He became one. He might, thenceforward claim to have been a creator "once upon a time," but clearly not to be so any longer. He would have been a creator *in posse* of the creature in question, only whilst the latter was not *in esse:* the instant this event supervened, His creative relation must have ceased, or become a merely historic verity.

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The selfhood in man, accordingly, is not absolute, but strictly finite and conditional. It is at bottom only a *quasi* or seeming selfhood, rigidly dependent upon the equilibrium of two opposing forces. These forces must be opposed, because if they were consentaneous, their accord would preclude the possibility of any middle or neutral term. And their opposition must be maintained in exact equilibrium, because if of two opposing forces either should preponderate, it would incontinently absorb the other, and thus equally vacate the required neutral element. Hence I repeat that the existence of God's creature is conditioned upon the exact equilibrium of two opposing forces. This equilibrium furnishes the indispensable basis of the creature's consciousness, so that if you take it away, you take away not merely that consciousness, but also all that divine and infinite blessedness to which this preliminary consciousness serves as a foundation.

Such is the law of the finite life or consciousness. It is not an absolute life, but a strictly conditional one. Accordingly, if we descend

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from the realm of law to that of experience, we shall find that the lowest or physical sphere of life is conditioned upon the extremes of pleasure and pain, or plenty and want. These are the boundaries of our physical experience or consciousness, and to their strict oppugnancy is due in the first place our rise out of vegetable into animal life, while to their strict equilibrium in the second place is due our subsequent rise out of animality into social and moral life. Let me make this plain.

My first proposition is that man is dependent upon the rigorous oppugnancy in his experience, of pleasure and pain, or plenty and want, for his development out of vegetable into animal conditions. For suppose that man were conscious only of pleasurable sensations, or that physical enjoyment without any mixture of physical suffering, constituted the sum of his normal experience. Do you not see at a glance that his life in this state of things would be a pure passivity, like that of a vegetable, and that he would be as destitute of volition, which is the sign of animality, as the flower whose

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inert existence is expended in blindly following the daily circuit of the sun? This is the peculiarity of the vegetable subject that it is born for pleasure alone, to sport in the breeze and revel in the sun, and that it perishes consequently under the least blast of adversity. See the gigantic oak, for example, whose summer foliage is able to embower an army, and whose years are counted by centuries: let but the first breath of autumn blow upon it, and these vivid leaves grow pale with fright, and hasten to deposit their multitudinous glories in the dust. How stiff and stark and dead is the entire vegetable creation through the long night of winter! And this simply because the vegetable life is one of pleasure alone, and perishes therefore by the slightest oppugnancy of pain. Thus we see that the oppugnancy of pleasure and pain is needed to lift the living subject out of the mere vegetable existence which would be imposed upon him by the experience of pleasure alone, and to endow him with animality.

My further proposition is that man is

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dependent upon the rigorous *equilibrium* of these opposing elements of pleasure and pain, for his subsequent elevation out of animal into social life. Life, in so far as it is animal merely, is promoted by the inequality of these extremes, or by the alternate pressure of pleasure and pain, plenty and want. For this alternation developes will in the subject, or stimulates reaction, by awakening hope and fear, and setting it upon the supply of its own wants. And man therefore so far as his animal development goes, has doubtless needed just this discipline of inequality in his physical existence. But man is more than animal, he is above all things social, and requires therefore to be elevated out of merely animal into social conditions. The animal subject is not social, because all his activity is demanded by his purely physical necessities. He feels no spiritual unity with his kind, inspiring him with sentiments of justice and courtesy. He knows only the alternation of pleasure and pain, or plenty and want. Daily want stimulates him to daily repletion, and with repletion come indolence and torpor until

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the next recurrence of hunger.* The animal is accordingly placable or easy to be entreated when full, fierce and sanguinary when empty. In short his nature controls him, and anticipates whatever of honor or shame might otherwise attach to the individual subject. Thus you do not credit the individual lion with his courage: that is, you do not attribute moral courage to him, but only physical. You do not credit the individual fox with his cunning: that is, you do not ascribe any moral obliquity to him, but testify only to a purely natural trait. And you do not credit the individual sheep with his gentleness. That is to say, you attribute no moral virtue to him, but simply discern in him an agreeable *natural* contrast to other animals. In short, the differential attributes in all these cases are generic or natural, instead of indi-

* If the animal is ever truly social, if it obey in any degree the sentiment of fellowship, as in the case of the bee, the ant, the beaver, &c., it is a purely natural society or fellowship. It is the society of beaver with beaver, or of white ant with white ant, having no bond above the supply of their physical necessities, and being eternally destitute therefore of spiritual progression.

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vidual or moral, and you accordingly acquit the individual subject of all praise or blame therefor.

But man's life besides being animal, is also in a far more eminent degree social. That is to say, what distinguishes man from all other existences, is, that he feels a sentiment of *fellowship* with his kind so acute and real, as to make the benefit or the injustice done to his fellow man seem like a benefit or injustice done to himself. Now what I wish to say is, that this phenomenon of human society becomes possible only in so far as an exact balance or equilibrium of pleasure and pain, or plenty and want, takes place in the sphere of man's physical existence. Human society or fellowship is absolutely due to this equilibrium. Suppose for a moment that this equilibrium did not exist; suppose for example that by a Divine decree pleasure prevailed in human affairs; want and pain would of course soon disappear, and human life become a theatre of unmixed enjoyment. What would be the result to society? Obviously, if luxury waited upon man's foot-

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steps, if all his wants were anticipated by the bounty of Providence, and a full supply accorded *gratis* every day, the interdependence of man upon man must speedily become unfelt, and the social sentiment, or the sentiment of fellowship, give place to one of extreme indifference on the part of every man to his neighbor. Every man being rendered independent of his neighbor by the Divine bounty, social obligation or the sentiment of fellowship, would of course soon grow unknown. In short, universal plenty would engender universal indifference, and where the spring of human action would be thus uniform, there could be no room for characteristic differences.

Now suppose on the other hand, that pain or want prevailed in human affairs, and this by a Divine law. It is of course evident in this state of things, that pain must soon absorb all lingering remains of pleasure, that want must soon eat up every vestige of garnered abundance, and the human family be fast reduced to starvation. What would then be the result to society? It would incontinently disappear. For

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if want dogged every man's footsteps equally and unceasingly, it is clear that every man alike would be driven to save himself from suffering by the plunder of his neighbor, and human society be dissolved in mutual rapine and violence. Social obligation would be swallowed up in the lower obligation of self-preservation, and universal want engendering universal selfishness would of course obliterate all the characteristic differences of men.

The phenomenon of human society or fellowship then is incontestably due to the equilibrium of plenty and want, or pleasure and pain, in the lowest or physical sphere. In so far as this equilibrium becomes approximately attained, human society becomes converted from an idea, or a truth, into a fact, becomes an organized and visible body. The idea or truth which animates human society, and which incessantly stimulates political revolutions and reforms with a view to its own fuller and eventually perfect embodiment, is the idea or truth of the exact fellowship or equality of man with man. This is an eternal truth, because it

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grows out of the superior truth, that there is one God and Father of the whole family of man. Human history is simply a slow, but unceasing approximation to the realization of this idea, or its embodiment in institutions. And this embodiment becomes perfect, becomes worthy of the spiritual truth, as the family of man increases in material wealth, or what is the same thing, in so far as the equilibrium of plenty and want becomes extended over the race. Human society or fellowship is still very imperfectly embodied even in the most advanced countries of the earth. But we plainly see that wherever it does exist in any measure, *there* also there exists a certain freedom or emancipation of man from the bondage of the lower life, enabling and prompting him to aspire to higher things; and this freedom or emancipation is wholly contingent upon the degree in which the equilibrium of pleasure and pain, or plenty and want, *has been realized within that social boundary.*

In order to see the truth of this proposition, it will be advisable to take some lesser society,

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say some derivative professional society formed within the large and gross political society, and observe what honor, what honesty, what generosity, what courtesy from all to each, and each to all! Within the bounds of this brotherhood, all the members are upon an equal social footing. They feel the bond which unites them to be intensely human and spiritual, and that to violate it therefore by any meanness or discourtesy would be tantamount to renouncing humanity. Yet these lesser societies are merely a prophecy of the larger society which is one day to come; they are merely so many minute germ-cells of that stupendous society or fellowship, which shall one day lift universal man above the grovelling tendencies of his nature, and open an endless pathway to his pursuit of truth and goodness.

Let not this be considered a digression. I have endeavored to prove that human society is based upon the emancipation of man from the *bondage* of the lower or physical life, and that this emancipation is possible only in so far as a balance has been realized between outward

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plenty and want. But I have done so only in the interests of this capital truth, viz., that man is destitute of any absolute selfhood: that his moral selfhood is quite as finite and conditional as his physical one. For morality is a purely social phenomenon. Take away the essential fellowship of man with man, and you take away the entire ground of moral obligation. It is good for me to bless my brother, and evil for me to injure him, why? Because we are equally the children of one God and Father, reciprocally dependent upon the same vital influence, and my participation of this vital influence will consequently depend upon my observing the same practical attitude towards my brother that God observes. God's attitude to every creature is one of unceasing use or benignity. If I maintain the same, the divine life will flow into me in an unobstructed manner. If I maintain a contrary attitude, if I put myself in a gratuitously hostile relation to my brother, I exclude the divine life from my soul, and my outward life becomes starved and diabolic.

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There is no other foundation for morality than this. It is because all men are equals—are fellows—are *socii*—in the divine sight, that my eternal well-being is conditioned upon my loving my neighbor as myself. I do not love the horse or the sheep or the ox as myself; on the contrary, I habitually reduce them to my servitude. I treat them of course in the kindest possible manner, promoting in every way their health and comfort: but I do thus only with a view to making them more and more serviceable to me. Were they not serviceable either for use or ornament to my own life, I should immediately renounce all care for them, and allow them to die out. But this is not my relation to my fellow-man. I do not reduce him to my servitude; I dare not put a merely pecuniary value on him: because my conscience tells me that it is a heinous affront to God thus to defile His image. If I do thus (towards the negro, for example) in ignorance, or traditionally, and as an inheritance from my forefathers, the spiritual injury it does me is only temporary of course. But if I do it against light, if I

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do it when all mankind are awaking to its atrocity, if above all I seek to justify the evil of slavery by Divine laws, or in principle, I spiritually exclude the Divine influence from me, and shut myself up in hell. By an infallible law my own relation to the universal Father becomes henceforth servile instead of filial, outward instead of inward.

Now the reason why I dare not reduce my fellow-man to my compulsory servitude, whatever be his color, while at the same time I reduce the ox, the ass, and the horse to such servitude is, that the one is my fellow or equal, and the other is not. Fellowship or equality alone gives morality. With the animal creation my relations cannot possibly be those of society, fellowship or equality, but only relations of providence, care, protection, and therefore superiority on the one part; and of dependence, submission, servitude, and therefore inferiority, on the other part. If the ox or the ass or the horse, were my *socius* or fellow, my conscience would unerringly stigmatize my present relations to him as evil, whereas it

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actually affirms them to be the best possible under the circumstances. Thus it is only the essential society, fellowship or equality which man is under to man, that furnishes the basis of moral distinctions among men. Take away therefore the great fact of human society, and you utterly destroy the obligations of morality.

Human society or fellowship precedes all government, as the soul precedes the body. Governments are only the implements by which society seeks to organize itself, and governmental changes when they express social expansion in any direction, are therefore in the highest degree both necessary and salutary. Hence the just contempt which all men feel for government *in se*, or when it no longer represents the spirit of society, and seeks to do the will of a faction or a class, and the perfect respect they entertain for it relatively to its uses. I am not a good man, because I obey the behests of any government under the sun, nor a bad man because I disobey them. I am a good or a bad man exclusively as I obey or disobey the needs

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of society, the sentiment of human fellowship. Popular governments have quite as much need to recognize this truth as aristocratic ones. "The voice of the people" is not "the voice of God," except you reduce God to the dimensions of some special people, some base Judæa or Rome. The voice of the people is never the voice of the true God except you identify the people with universal humanity, whose voice is heard only in that law which bids us love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind, and our neighbor as ourself. The sole voice of God heard on earth is that delegated to human society or fellowship, and which utters itself in the golden rule, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, the same do ye also unto them.*

Two things then have become abundantly plain: 1. That God's creature must possess moral life or consciousness in order to the subsequent communication of the Divine life and blessedness to him; and 2. That this life or consciousness cannot *ipso facto* be absolute or unconditioned, since it is strictly subordinate to

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this superior end. The end which God proposes by the gift of moral life or freedom to man, is the communication to him of His own eternal peace and goodness. Thus the life or freedom which distinguishes man from the brute, is not a natural possession of man, but a Divine endowment, and it is imparted to him not for its own sake or to enable him merely to transcend brute existence, but to serve as the basis or platform of a higher Divine communication to him, a communication which shall lift him into the eternal fellowship of God. In other words, the life or freedom which I now feel and enjoy, is not designed in itself to constitute my happiness, but to serve as an indispensable medium to that happiness, flowing from a higher source. Hence it no more separates me from God, or renders me independent of Him, than the freedom I allow my child renders him properly independent of me. I allow my child a certain freedom of action. It is not an absolute freedom, or a freedom which is its own end, permitting the boy to be angel or devil, as chance and his inherited disposition

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may determine. On the contrary it is a rational freedom, or one which is strictly in order to something else, this something being the development of a manly character in the child, and consequently it involves on my part the administration of a strict discipline. I desire my child to become an upright man, a man in whom goodness shall be induced not by mercenary motives as brute goodness is induced, but by love for it or a sympathetic delight in it. And inasmuch as I know that this character or disposition cannot be forcibly imposed upon him, but must be freely assumed, I surround him as far as possible with an atmosphere of freedom, instructing his understanding by moral truths, and investing him with a certain responsibility over his own conduct, which fosters his sense of dignity, and conciliates his sympathy towards my design. But the child has certain natural or inherited tendencies which deflect him from my design, or tempt him to the inordinate indulgence of his natural appetites. In order to reduce the force of these opposing influences, in order to free him in other words from

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the bondage of his nature, I am forced on occasion to punish him. Thus the freedom I allow him is not absolute, is not a freedom which is tantamount to moral indifference, and which therefore allows him to plunge into every lawless lust, but is strictly in order to the development of a certain manly character in him: and if accordingly he misuses my gift, or if he uses it only to deepen his inherited tendencies, I am led by the very interests of his freedom to punish him, and so counterbalance the force of these tendencies. Otherwise, I should leave him to their full and unimpeded sweep, and very probably incur a defeat of all my hopes. Only thoughtless persons can imagine that the punishment I thus inflict, is a virtual revocation of the child's freedom. Every thoughtful person must see at a glance that this punishment is itself under certain contingencies essential to his freedom, is essential to his deliverance from the undue coercion of his nature; and that to withhold it therefore would imply on my part, not the loving heart of a father watchful for his child's perfection, but the in-

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difference of a stock or a stone, or at best the interested homage of a sycophant studious of commending himself to another's favor, by an abject servility to his lusts. Of course I have no idea that I shall perfectly insure the moral issue I crave for my child, by the discipline I administer: I merely design to reduce thereby the otherwise overpowering force of hostile influences, and so fortify the freedom which is essential to the due growth and development of his future character, whatever that may be.

Now the freedom which God gives us is precisely illustrated by this familiar example. It is not a final gift on his part, but a purely preliminary and mediatorial one. It is not given for its own sake, or as an expression of the Divine indifference to the spiritual destiny of His creature; but purely for the sake of the creature's spiritual elevation, or his becoming a spiritual image of the Divine perfection. Hence it is not an absolute but a conditional freedom, or a freedom which is conditioned upon its strict subservience to a certain end. This end is that man may be elevated

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out of his natural or inherited conditions, and allied to all eternity with God. Accordingly if man abuses it, that is, if he uses it only to re-enact and intensify the dominion of his nature, he necessarily incurs correction or punishment, and will continue to incur it until he ceases to invite it. The punishment will no doubt seem arbitrary and cruel to him, so long as he is unaware of the benignant aspect it bears to his own immortal destiny, or so long as he is incredulous of the infinite Love and Wisdom which provide it. Of course under these circumstances the judgment is perfectly unintelligent, and unworthy therefore of a moment's philosophic regard. It proceeds upon a mere ignorance or denial of the Divine character, and the implication of essentially external or brute relations between Him and His creature. But he who intelligently acknowledges the Divine perfection or infinitude, regards it as the perfection of character, as the infinitude of Love and Wisdom, and to suppose perfect Love and Wisdom indifferent to the welfare of its own dependent creature, or intent simply upon

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indulging the appetites of that creature, or his capacities of sensuous enjoyment, is a sheer absurdity and contradiction. A perfect Love and Wisdom must incessantly seek to elevate its creature into communion or fellowship with itself, and since this end can only be worthily carried out by means of the creature's freedom from the otherwise undue dominion of his nature, it is evident that the Divine Love and Wisdom stand pledged to correct and punish every instance of excessive abandonment to that dominion on the part of the creature.

Thus the very perfection of the Divine love forbids the gift of absolute freedom to man, since this would be to defeat the communication of His own blessedness to him, and requires that this freedom should be rigidly subservient to a higher end. It seems to me that this view of the subject clears it of all obscurity, and vindicates it from those reasonable and weighty objections which lie against the current ecclesiastical exhibitions of it. We have here a complete reconciliation between the fact of freedom, and the fact of dependence; for we see that

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man is endowed with freedom *strictly in order to his eternal conjunction with God.* Had he not this freedom, were he, like the animals, capable of acting only in obedience to his natural appetites, he could feel no emotions of spiritual life, or charity, much less obey them to the practical equalization of his brother with himself. Had he not life or freedom distinct from his bodily appetites, and powerful on occasion to control and modify them, he would be a simple brute, devoid of a rational spirit, and bound up in the doom of nature. But being free, having a life continually imparted by God, which is able to transcend those appetites, he becomes capable of appreciating to some extent the Divine purpose towards him, and of intelligently promoting it. Under no possible circumstances can this life or freedom render its subject independent of God, because its only legitimate purpose is to quicken and intensify his conjunction with God, and so promote his own blessedness. Even if, therefore, a man obdurately repugn the purpose of the Divine Love towards him, and abandon himself

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to the inordinate indulgence of his natural appetites, he does not thereby become independent of God. He does not love God it is true, nor even know Him. But he is nevertheless, and every moment the object of His perfect and ineffable love, and in every way his limited range of life allows, the recipient of its mercies.

Such is the entire philosophy, as I apprehend it, of man's moral experience, or of our finite selfhood. We are endowed with moral freedom not for its own sake, or as a finality, but simply as a means to our spiritual conjunction with God. Without that means this end would be strictly unattainable, as without this end, on the other hand, our moral experience remains totally inexplicable. Admit this end, admit that man is created for an eternal spiritual conjunction with God, and a flood of light is thrown over our moral history. Deny it, deny the normal subordination of our moral experience to a superior spiritual end, or make it its own end, and you make the divine creation a mere empiricism, so rendering the Divine

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Perfection itself essentially problematic. You indeed make God the author of Evil.

It is precisely here that the old Theology signalizes its Naturalism. It fails to perceive that the natural creation is essentially or intrinsically subordinate to a superior spiritual one, and hence is totally incapable not merely of solving the specific problem of Evil, but also in general of exhibiting even an approximately true doctrine of man. It supposes man to have been created subject to his nature, *in place of invariably incurring such subjection by his own folly ;* and hence it is at an utter loss to account for the phenomenon of human freedom. Looking upon man as having been created natural, it is of course bound to whitewash human nature, or free it from any original and intrinsic tendencies to evil, by making evil come about in a strictly *super*-natural way, that is, by the will of a nature superior to the human, and capable of controlling its tendencies. Undoubtedly this hypothesis is countenanced by a purely sensuous reading of the early and mystical cosmogonies, but for that very reason is

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sure to exhibit an utterly fallacious estimate of what man is in himself, or by nature. For if, on the one hand, man be regarded as created by God in complete subjection to his nature, and if, on the other hand, evil ensues by the intervention of another party controlling that nature, it is clear that man himself is free from the complicity of evil. It is his nature which governs him, which gives him character instead of deriving character from him, and as to every thing he does therefore by its control, he has a perfect right to claim the immunity of an agent, and refer the entire responsibility to his principal. It is very curious that the attention of those who are interested in vindicating the current theology from philosophic reprehension, should not be arrested by the manifest inferiority under which it places man to his nature, and the consequent logical impeccability it confers upon man himself. Man's nature is uniformly regarded as something quite superior to the man himself, and as possessing an absolute control over him. Accordingly, throughout your book you speak of God's obligation to

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give man a "good natural constitution," and nothing is more common in discussions of this tenor, than to hear it affirmed that God originally created in man "a good nature." Thus the nature of man is viewed as a paramount entity to the man himself. It is regarded as one thing, and he as a totally distinct and subordinate thing, so that the whole question of human responsibility becomes fatally compromised. For if human nature be one thing, and man a distinctly other and subordinate thing in the divine sight, it is clear that the latter should not be responsible for what he does at the beck of the former. If human nature be a distinct entity from man himself, and at the same time possess a controlling power over him, it follows that in all their joint transactions nature alone is the responsible party, and man simply servile.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the theology with which you are ecclesiastically identified, should confess itself impotent before the great problem of Evil. Every theology must do so which first posits man in subordination to his

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nature, and then exhibits God as condemning him for acting in obedience to this extrinsic control. How is it possible, upon any such *datum*, to vindicate the divine justice? How is it possible, if man be created subject to his nature, to account for the bare existence of morality, or claim the slightest basis in him for the development of a *spiritual* life? In fact the current theology utterly renounces a spiritual creation, save under the clumsy and contradictory guise of a reproduction of the natural one. It teaches that natural life, or existence in time and space, was God's primeval gift to man, and that it was only the forfeiture of this gift by man's actual disobedience, which brought in natural death and its affiliated ills. It holds that life on the earth, a deathless life in the material body, was God's original benefaction to man, and that it was only when man had proved himself unworthy to enjoy it by sin, that the promise of another life beyond the grave was held forth to the penitent. And what was the nature of this life? It was to be the redintegration and resurrection of the

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natural body, of course. For if man be created subject to his natural body, he must share the fate of this body, and if the body dies, therefore, he can participate in a new creation only by the revivification of his natural body. Hence what the churches call spiritual life, is merely the *post mortem* extension or renewal of physical existence.

So completely, in fact, has this conception become ingrained in the human mind, that we find men of good intelligence, judges and senators in Congress, giving in their lively adhesion to what they call "spiritual rappings," and regarding it as a much needed proof of immortal existence that some vulgar and waxen caricature of Benjamin Franklin or Francis Bacon, should certify us that he had found a cadaverous resuscitation beyond the grave, and was accordingly destined to remain to all eternity the pride of his mother's eyes, and the delight of his grandmother's. So entirely arbitrary seems the connection between the present and future life, so little rational subordination does the popular theology see between the reigning

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temper or spirit of a man and his prospect of heaven, that nothing is more common than to hear the most inveterate scoundrels diligently encouraged at their last hour to look for heaven's bliss. And whenever you hear a clergyman expressing a despair of any particular individual's safety, the despair does not appear to be moved by the consideration, that the individual is of that spiritual habit or make which will probably for ever continue to avert him from Divine things, but only that he has so outraged the Divine patience that God must necessarily refuse to forgive him.

All this is the inevitable logical fruit of the old Theology. Looking upon human freedom as absolute, or as a fact of man's physical constitution, that theology must necessarily be at a total loss to connect it with a superior and spiritual creation. It supposes that man was endowed with this freedom as a finality, or as its own end, and not simply as a means to a far higher end: and consequently, when it reports him falling from his original creation, it exhibits this freedom as involved in the fall, and

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hence of course as utterly incapable of affording any available foothold with respect to another life this side of the grave. In short, the current Theology turns man's original creation into a complete failure, his freedom not surviving, and hence it logically discharges him of all responsibility with respect to the new creation by making it an exclusively *post mortem* affair, or what is the same thing, denying him the power of an active co-operation, and throwing the *onus* of its realization in every case upon the mere good pleasure of Deity. Accordingly by the sheer stress of its own scientific infirmity, it is driven to frame, under the technical names of *election*, *predestination*, *imputation*, and so forth, an hypothesis of the divine sovereignty so dismal and abhorrent as to make a rational cosmology intrinsically incredible, and turn human wit itself, when exercised above the level of secular things, into a delirious dance of folly.

But to return to the true doctrine of human freedom. There is no such *entity* or *thing* as human nature. Human nature is a purely abstract term by which we mean to express what-

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soever is common to man, and whatsoever therefore separates him from other existence. In its theologic applications, the term is used to express nothing more and nothing less than what man is in *himself*, and apart from divine influence. It expresses what man is *in se*, in a state of *uncreation* so to speak, or before he is created in the divine image; and hence to regard it as a something created by God *additional* to man himself, and dominating him, is to sink the truth in endless confusion, and virtually to vacate human accountability. The word expresses the undivine side of man, the finite side, or the aspect he exhibits when he averts himself from the divine influence, and declines the elevation it offers him. In the largest application of the term Nature, it has a precisely analogous force. For *nature* in its largest sense signifies the universal community of things, the community of existing things, or whatsoever all things possess in common. It does not mean history, civilization, culture; it does not mean the differences which art engenders in the community of existing things; it simply means that

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community itself. And in its more limited applications, this sense is preserved; as for example when we say "the nature of a horse," "the nature of a rose." Here the word expresses whatsoever is common to all horses, and all roses. Both the horse and the rose by culture and the operation of local or special causes, may be very variously developed, but the common nature of the horse or the rose remains unaffected by all these modifications. The Shetland pony is as genuine a horse, or as true a partaker of the horse-nature, as the English cart-horse, or the Arabian courser; and the Harrison rose is as true a rose or as genuine a partaker of the rose-nature, as if its color were ruby red. Thus the nature of the horse includes or accounts for all those facts of structure and function which are the same in—or common to—all horses, whatever individual differences may subsequently be engrafted by art or training on that nature. And so of the rose.

Thus nature refuses to account for individuality, and asserts only identity or community. It asserts what the horse or the rose is

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in se, and abstractly from the operation of local or special causes. Wherefore if you should find any thing upon the earth so individual, or so distinct from all other things, as that you could discern no community between it and them, you would immediately pronounce it a *super*-natural phenomenon. Accordingly, whenever you chance to meet with any thing bearing slight analogies of structure or function with other things, you pronounce it "an uncommon or remarkable thing," as feeling at a loss to account for it on natural or common principles. Thus if Mr. Barnum should somewhere turn you up a violet colored horse, or a pig with a silken fleece, the marked individuality of the phenomenon would demand for its explanation some fact additional to that of the animal's nature. You would say that the nature of the horse or the pig in developing these monstrous forms or individualities, had obeyed some foreign and superior influence. In brief then, nature means community, means to express whatsoever its subjects possess in common, or what they are in themselves apart from foreign influence.

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It does not imply any visible tangible *entity* or thing, apart from the subject of which it is predicated, but only what that subject is *in se*, and apart from foreign interference.

In consonance with this use of the word nature, we mean when we speak of man's nature, or of human nature, to signify whatsoever things all men possess in common, whatsoever they are in themselves and apart from any foreign or superior influence. One man is tall or short as belonging to a particular family, one is learned or foolish as possessing or lacking a special culture, one is blond or brown as belonging to a certain race, but the common nature is unaffected by all these specific varieties, being precisely the same in the tall man as in the short, in the learned as in the ignorant, in the blond as in the brown. We indeed often say that one man's nature differs from another's, but our language does not exactly reflect our meaning in these cases. We do not mean to say as our language would imply, that the men in question do not possess a common nature, or are not quite equally men; we mean

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simply to say, that they possess a different natural temperament or disposition. One of them is *naturally* amiable and gentle, the other morose and turbulent; that is to say, these differences of disposition signalize themselves from infancy, and previously to all culture. But these differences are attributable not to a difference in the nature of the subjects, but only to the difference of their specific parentage, near or remote. The specific ancestral traits of either diversify their common nature, but do not impair it, so that either has a precisely equal claim with the other to the name and consideration of man.

Now, what constitutes the difference between man and the brute? What is man *in se*, and apart from all foreign influence? It is clear that he is totally destitute of being *in se*, because he is the creature of a superior power. But he has this destitution in common with all other things. Nothing has being *in se* but God alone. So far, then, horses and roses are precisely like man, since they are all alike naturally destitute of being, or doomed to decay. The

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nature of man, as well of animal and plant, is *not to be*, while the nature of God alone, on the other hand, is *to be*. What therefore is the exact difference between man on the one side, and the horse and the rose on the other, which justifies us in ascribing moral qualities to the one, and not to the other? It is that man, unlike the horse and the rose, is divinely lifted above the subjection of his nature, and endowed with a selfhood capable of subjecting it. It is that man is divinely free to obey other motives and aspirations than those which date from his physical appetites, while the horse and rose are not free. It is that man, unlike the animal or vegetable, is divinely empowered to sit in judgment upon his bodily appetites, and either to restrain them within certain rational limits, or else to urge them to the most injurious excess. In short, the difference is that man has a freedom continually imparted to him by God, while no animal and no vegetable have this freedom. Every man whose brain is not organically imperfect, has this faculty incessantly imparted to him. It is this faculty which makes

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him man, which constitutes his true distinction from the animal and vegetable, and stamps him the only fitting tabernacle of God.

Now it is precisely this characteristic difference between man and the lower natures, which empowers us to say with truth, that man, in so far as he gives himself up to the guidance of his nature, is prone to every evil. The animal obeys his nature without degradation, because he is not free to disobey it, because he is its unresisting vassal or servant. Thus when the horse kicks you, or the dog bites you, or the serpent stings you, you do not hold them morally, but only physically accountable. You say it is their *nature* to do so. But man by the Divine bounty is exempt from the control of his nature, and hence if he voluntarily give himself back to its control, he surrenders his celestial birthright, and is sure to bring up in the lowest depths of diabolism. Diabolism would be impossible under other circumstances. It has no other source than the misuse of the freedom which God gives man. It means neither more nor less than the perversion to base ends

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or uses, of a life or freedom which God has given only for the highest ends. God gives man freedom from the dominion of his nature, or gives him the power of acting as from himself, and not in simple obedience to his bodily appetites, in order that man may come into the knowledge of Himself, and into an everlasting spiritual conjunction with Him. If, then, man renounces this Divine destiny, if he use the freedom or life which God gives him only to reenact the dominion of his nature, you perceive at a glance that he puts himself as no animal can do, *in an attitude of hostility to the Divine purpose*, and hence tends to an utter estrangement from His image and likeness; tends in fact to a state of corruption, beside which animality for the most part is celestially sweet and clean, and which indeed rats and cockroaches only faintly typify. No horse and no rose can become diabolic, simply because they have no power to become angelic; that is, have no divinely imparted freedom to transcend their bodily limitations, and aspire to superior fellowship. They are carnal, not spiritual, and hence

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in remaining for ever incapable of regeneration, or of elevation above their natural level, they also remain for ever incapable of degeneration, or of degradation below it: that is, they remain incapable of diabolism.

Such as it seems to me is the true doctrine of human freedom, and I do not see what essential element of the question it fails to do justice to. Clearly no one who accepts it can help perceiving, how purely sentimental and gratuitous a benevolence it is which leads the theologian and philosopher to deny the corruption which man is under by nature. One perfectly accepts or even applauds this denial, considered as a reaction against a more vital error, for thus doubtless it indirectly promotes the cause of truth by divorcing men's respect from incomplete and obsolete formulas. The Calvinistic orthodoxy is wont so to deprave the relation of God to the soul, by representing Him as first demanding tribute from one whose nature renders him insolvent, and then as remorselessly damning him to eternal torments on account of this natural insolvency, that the

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devoutest instincts of the heart must needs *mumble* an indignant disclaimer of the iniquity, before the intellect is instructed to give the disclaimer a strictly logical form.

The sectarian theology represents man as damned by God *on account of his nature.* It does not import that man by a misuse of his freedom, or by the voluntary surrender and prostration of himself to his natural lusts, forfeits the Divine image and favor, and debases himself below the beasts that perish: *it imports that he is in the strictest bondage of his nature, and without any power to disobey it: that he is in a state of inability to will a good word, or think a good thought: and that he is nevertheless in this state of things held accountable by God, and unless rescued by God's sovereign grace in Christ, doomed to undergo the pains of hell for ever.* No wonder that an upright and tender-hearted man like Dr. Channing, or Henry Ware, should revolt from a creed at once so puerile and so atrocious, and under the first impulse of reactionary zeal, vibrate to the opposite extreme. You have done willing justice

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to the character of these gentlemen, or to the moral aspects of the movement they represent; but your own ecclesiastical limitations hinder you from seeing wherein they, no less than their antagonists, fail to render any intellectual service to Christianity. They have all alike the same *naturalistic* stand-point, only that the one party places the *venue* of the Divine dealings with man in a nature more good than evil, the other in a nature more evil than good. In both cases alike nature initiates and qualifies the relation between God and the individual soul. Neither party contemplates God as giving man an eternal exemption from the dominion of his nature, and this in order to the sublimest of subsequent benefactions; and consequently both alike are incapable of imagining either the true and irresistible claim which God prefers to man's allegiance, or the just self-reproach which man incurs when he withholds that allegiance.

What gives man a conscience of sin, or a sense of ill-desert towards God, is not that he has an evil nature, but that he himself *freely*

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obeys that nature in lieu of the voice of God. No man whose actual iniquities do not leave him a good deal of spare time, or whose piety is not somewhat plethoric, can afford himself the purely metaphysical satisfaction of repentance for natural evils. Good old Dr. Miller, of Princeton, used to say, in order to illustrate the force of his belief in the "federal headship" of Adam, that he had literally repented himself of that distant progenitor's sin. But the dear old man was of so sweet and courteous a disposition by nature, that his actual or proper sins gave him a sinecure almost, or had scarcely bulk enough to ruffle the placid current of his life; and he was consequently left all manner of leisure and inclination for acts of supererogatory and luxurious devotion. It is a great damage to a man to have much time allowed him for the cultivation of direct and aggressive piety, or a piety which is over and above the honest pursuit of one's honest avocations in life. Piety which springs from a heart at repose in God, which feels that it possesses all things in possessing Him, in short, gospel or Christian

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piety, which consists in bestowing one's inward peace and contentment on all around him, is of course the loveliest possible adornment of the human spirit. But the piety of an unreconciled heart, a piety which is ambitious to qualify itself for the Divine acceptance by becoming something it intrinsically is not; in short, legal or Jewish piety, which drives a man to the perpetual assault of Deity by a perpetual gymnastic of praise, prayer, and self-sacrifice, in order to win a favor not yet bestowed: is awfully deleterious. One's wealth —unless one be of an exceptional natural modesty—one's wealth accrues so rapidly in that line, whether by the actual attainments conceived to be accomplished, or by the mournings and mortifications and pungent humiliations consequent upon the failure to attain, that one can hardly help the access of a subtle spiritual pride which shall eventually lay the flourishing structure in the dust. You know how offensive all popularly accredited saints are apt to prove. The obvious reason is that their piety is dramatic and interested instead of be-

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ing real and contented; that it is generated from ostentatious instead of working ends; that it is in short its own end, and therefore inwardly destitute of the Divine impulse and benediction: and piety which is its own end, which is not worked off, which is not continually wrought into the sparkling and joyous woof of life, is sure like unworked steam to become gaseous and attenuated, and finally to explode in ways very destructive to social continuity and comfort.

I am very far, however, from deeming these observations pertinent to the venerated name I have just mentioned. A less mercenary, or more guileless piety than Dr. Miller's, I never knew, and he would have been universally reckoned a pattern of Christian manhood, if the extreme sweetness of his natural disposition, and the exquisite urbanity of his manners, by giving him so much superficial and secular sanctity as well, had not somewhat overlaid the depths of genuine humility in which his soul habitually dwelt. God love and bless his honored head for ever!

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But I am digressing. It is absurd to suppose a man capable of mourning over his "natural evils," if you mean by those his inherited tendencies to evil. No man can help his own inheritance, nor change it, if he should strive till doomsday. His true evil lies in himself, or in that principle of selfhood which leads him to obey the voice of sensual pleasure instead of the voice of God. Why is it evil for man to do thus? Because he is really created *to live, not by bread chiefly, but by every word that issues from the mouth of God.* Accordingly no man, save in deference to some theoretic necessity, feels himself responsible for his nature. No man condemns himself when he feels that he has been overpowered by his nature, when his conduct has been coerced by some absolute natural necessity. Who condemns himself for killing the assassin whose hand is uplifted to murder him? Who condemns himself for making his neighbor's property available to his own natural *necessities?* Who does not justify the slave, for example, in taking his master's horse, or any thing else that may be conve-

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nient, to expedite his escape from bondage? An artificial or conventional morality based upon calico conceptions of religion, may say nay to these interrogatories, but the heart of every man not hopelessly indurated, says yes. In fact as we have seen all along, the very existence of morality or of conscience in man, is contingent upon his being free from the *control* of his nature. Nothing vitiates moral responsibility so instantly, as the subject's ability to prove that he acted in any case under constraint of his nature, as, for example, to save himself from imminent death or injury.

Thus morality discloses a life superior to nature in man, discloses a *super*natural life, or one which allies him with the Infinite. Hence in order to solve the problems your book opens, it is necessary to give them an entirely new intellectual statement, abandoning promptly and totally the old and sterile hypothesis of an arbitrary and extrinsic derivation of evil to man. What is called the Fall of man consisted in no change of his intrinsic nature from good to evil. He never lapsed from a state of goodness-in-

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himself into one of evil-in-himself, for the simple reason that he never was and never could have been good-in-himself. All goodness possible to the creature is *ex vi termini* a derivation from God to him. Hence man viewed in himself, or apart from God, is and ever was unchangeably evil, and his fall consisted therefore not by any means in his becoming evil *in se*, but in his lack of acquiescence in that fact, or his unwillingness to make such a judgment of himself. The Fall did not signalize the conversion of man from good *in se* to evil *in se*. It merely signalized his own dawning aversion to regard himself any longer in that light, or what is the same thing, the gradual access of self-love, and the consequent cessation of love to God and the neighbor. His fall was his elevation in his own conceit, and hence it was a pure mercy upon the part of God to endow him with conscience or the faculty of self-condemnation. It never was and never can be a legitimate opprobrium to man that he is destitute of life by nature, or *in se* and apart from God, since the very communication to him of the Divine life

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implies, or is conditioned upon such destitution. His sole just opprobrium is, that BEING THUS DESTITUTE *he gives himself airs of self-sufficiency*, airs of supreme goodness and wisdom, and like a fool unlearns his dependence.

Thus it is never the fact of our intrinsic or natural destitution which spiritually separates us from God, and renders His voice plaintive in our behalf: it is only the fact of our superinduced or accessory pride, which makes us ashamed of that destitution, and leads us to conceal or cover it up by the fig-leaves of natural good. Our intrinsic or natural destitution is the infallible badge of our creatureship, and is therefore what most surely unites us with God so long as we heartily acknowledge it. One would not shrink accordingly, from the imputation of all the natural and moral evil in the universe to him, provided he were kept free at the same time of the spirit of self-justification, or spiritual pride. The truth of our creatureship, the great truth that in the Lord alone we live and move and have our being, perfectly reconciles us to the fact of our essential and in-

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trinsic destitution, by quieting every ambitious aspiration, or divorcing us from all desire to be any thing in ourselves. The lowliest shrubs send up the most grateful fragrance to heaven. And it is only when a spirit of unbelief in our creatureship actuates us, or when we aspire to be our own goodness and wisdom, and hence stifle the instinct of dependence, that we truly forfeit the Divine smile, and taste the bitterness of eternal death. Adam and Eve were as naked or free from all intrinsic righteousness, before the Fall as after, but their nakedness gave them no conscience of shame, or sense of separation from God. But when the serpent (or the growth of the sensuous understanding) inflamed them with the pride of freedom, and the lust of becoming something in themselves, they immediately grew ashamed of this nakedness, and by that shame felt themselves separated from God. They were afraid of the Divine presence because *they knew* they were naked. They knew the fact quite as well before they had eaten of the tree as after, but then the knowledge was unimportant and gave them no

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shame, because it was unattended by spiritual pride or self-seeking. And the Lord said unto the man, "*who has told thee that thou wert naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?*" You observe the Lord is not represented as inquiring, "what has *made* you naked?"—but only "how have you *become conscious* of your nakedness?" Thus the Fall is always a fall from previous peace and enjoyment in God, to a state of turmoil, labor and sorrow in ourselves. It does not imply any change in the Divine goodness towards us, for that goodness is unchangeable, but only such a change in our own intelligence as makes the all-sufficiency of the Divine goodness seem questionable, and throws us consequently on our own resources. Accordingly the death we partake in Adam, and from which we are delivered in Christ, is not natural death or the death of the body, for nothing can be sweeter than this or more orderly, but an adventitious and accessory death growing out of our spiritual aversion from God, and an insane effort to become our own centre of life.

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Here then is the origin of spiritual evil, or the evil which equally besets you and me and all mankind, whatever moral or physical diversities relatively characterize us. It consists in looking upon the moral life or freedom which God gives us purely as a basis of our subsequent spiritual conjunction with Him, as an absolute gift, or as a final instead of a mediatorial possession. The moral consciousness I enjoy, that is to say, the freedom or power which I feel to do—or not to do—this, that, and the other thing, is a great and blessed reality, for it is incessantly communicated to me by God, in order that feeling as if my life were in myself, while yet reflectively attributing it to Him, I may incessantly and cordially aspire after a growing spiritual conjunction with Him. But the selfhood into which I interpret the freedom or power thus communicated, is a pure fallacy, growing out of the domination of the sensuous principle in me. There is no such thing in the universe (there is no such creation possible to the divine power) as a simple, absolute, or independent selfhood; and yet I habitually count

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upon this selfhood as if it were the most indisputable of realities, elated by its good and dejected by its evil, exactly as if it were the divinely indicated source of these things. Is morality then a cheat, an illusion? By no means. It is the grandest of facts, because it is designed to serve as the platform or basis of an otherwise impracticable conjunction between God and ourselves. It will always be good accordingly for a man to deal justly with his neighbor; it will always be evil for him to deal unjustly with his neighbor. But it is fatal to appropriate this good and evil, or what is the same thing, to be content with this merely moral existence without rendering it subservient to a higher. It is fatal, in other words, to grow conceited, or to believe that we are something in ourselves. For we instantly cease in that case to eat of the tree of life, and begin to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, whose fruit is death. That is, we cease to live by God, and begin to live by ourselves.

"To eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," as represented by the wisest of

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the moderns,* means to obtain a knowledge of the *summum bonum* from self and the world, or to investigate celestial things by sensual methods. We eat of this tree accordingly "in believing that we are wise and do good from ourself, or that life is in self instead of God." The natural man "believes his selfhood (*pro-*

* I do not hesitate so to characterize EMANUEL SWEDENBORG. If my recommendation possess any weight with the readers of these pages, I would earnestly entreat them, especially such as are interested in the prospect of a scientific theology, to lose no time in consulting the writings of this most remarkable man. They wear an uninviting aspect no doubt to a superficial examination, but whosoever is in earnest to get his otherwise insuperable intellectual difficulties in regard to Christianity relieved, and his otherwise insatiable thirst for clear divine knowledge appeased, may persevere in the full confidence that he will not be disappointed. For Swedenborg demonstrates to the perfect satisfaction of the reason, that the law which brought Christ to die and rise again, in order to redeem man from eternal death, and which necessitates the regeneration of those who are thus redeemed in order to their heavenly conjunction with him, is only a higher aspect of the same law which binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and guides Arcturus with his sons, only a grander procession of the same Love which causes the grass to grow for the cattle and every herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth.

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prium) to be his all, and imagines that if he were to lose it, he should perish. But the heavenly man perceives that the Lord is the life of all, and that He alone gives power to think and act. This man accordingly never desires selfhood; still it is continually imparted to him by the Lord, enlivened with every perception of good and truth, and with all felicity."

"Life viewed in itself, which is God, cannot create another which shall be life in itself, because the life which is God is uncreated, is unbroken (*continens*) and indivisible: hence it is that God is one. But God can create forms or receptacles of life from substances void of life, in which forms He may dwell, and give to them the appearance of life in themselves. Such forms are men, who accordingly are not life, but only receptacles of life from God. It follows from these statements, that man is nothing of himself, and that he is something only by virtue of his receptivity from God. It seems to man that he lives from himself, but this is a fallacy, for otherwise he would be capable of

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loving God, and of being wise, from himself. The ground of this fallacious appearance is that life inflows from the Lord into the inmost affections of man, which are remote from the inspection of his thought and are consequently unperceived. Another ground is that the principal cause, or Life, and the instrumental cause, or the recipient of life, act as ONE; and this oneness is felt in the instrumental cause or the recipient, thus in man, as if it were in himself. Still another ground of the fallacious appearance is, that the Divine love is so great as to will that what is its own should be man's, even while it teaches him that it is not his. But he who reflects more deeply, may know that man is in every respect only an organ of life, and that what produces sense and perception in him inflows from a higher source, and that it is the Life itself which makes man to feel and perceive—*as from himself.*"

"That all power belongs to God and utterly none at all (*prorsus nulla*) to man or angel, is because God alone is Life, and man and angel mere recipients of Life: and it is Life

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which acts, while the recipient of Life is acted upon. Every one may see that a recipient of Life cannot act from itself at all, and that its activity comes from the Life which is God. But it can act *as from itself*, for this can be allowed, and is allowed. And if man does not live from himself, it follows that he does not think and will from himself, nor speak and act from himself, but from God who alone is Life. This seems paradoxical, because man does not feel otherwise than that these powers are in himself: yet he acknowledges whilst he speaks from faith, that all good and truth are from God, and all evil and falsity from the Devil.—The angels of the superior heavens have a palpable feeling of this truth, and the wisest among them do not indeed wish to think and to will as from themselves. But infernal natures on the other hand utterly deny this truth, and grow angry when it is alleged. An intelligent conception upon the subject may be obtained by reference to natural analogies. Heat and light from the natural sun flow in to inanimate subjects upon the earth, precisely as heat

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and light from the spiritual sun inflow into animate subjects. Now suppose these former subjects were animated, they would feel the effects of natural heat and light in themselves, and would suppose them to be from themselves, when yet they depart with the sun, and return with the sun."

"It is at present believed in the world, that one's life is given to him, and put in him (*sit data ac indita*), so as to become his own, and that it is not a continuous inflow from God. But that life is in man, so as to be *of* him as is now believed, is only an APPEARANCE growing out of the perpetual presence of the Lord and his Divine love, which seeks to be conjoined to man, and to be in him, and to give him its own life—for such is the nature of the Divine love. And because this presence and effort of the Divine love are unceasing and continuous, man supposes that the life is inserted in him as his own, whereas it is known that all goodness and truth come from above to man, and do not originate in him, thus are an influx. The receptacle of good in man is the will, that of truth

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is the understanding; in these two faculties all the life of man resides: yet the life of these faculties, consequently the life of the whole man, is not in the man himself, but is an inflow from God. That evil and falsity appear in him, is also owing to influx, but this influx is from hell, and it serves the purpose of promoting man's spiritual equilibrium, or freedom.—That there is one sole fountain of life, and that all life is thence derived, and continually flows in, is most notorious in heaven, and is never called in question by any angel of the superior heavens, for they perceive the very influx itself. That all lives are as streams from one sole and perennial fountain of life, has been rendered evident to me besides from much experience, having been illustrated with those who supposed that they lived from themselves, and were unwilling to believe that their life flowed in from the Lord. When the influx into their thought was arrested in any measure, they lay as if exanimate, and when the influx ensued, they revived apparently from death, and then confessed that their life was not of

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themselves, but was a constant inflow, and that men, spirits, and angels are only forms receptive of life."

"No angel is an angel of himself;" that is, the angel is *intrinsically* undistinguishable from the devil, the difference between them being occasioned solely by one receiving life from the Lord, and the other rejecting it. "Hence it is, that the angels are desirous that the term should always be understood spiritually, or abstractedly from persons, and as meaning Divine truths."

"No man has any selfhood in the sense in which the word is commonly understood. For by selfhood is commonly meant that which lives from itself, and hence thinks and wills from itself. But such a selfhood does not exist in any man, yea and cannot exist in any, because there is only one Life, and men are only recipients or organs of life. Both by creation and the continual providence of the Lord, it is ordained that Life should appear in a man as if it were his own, and consequently proper to himself: but this is an appearance, to the end

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that He may be a receptacle of the Divine love and wisdom. I say accordingly *that man has not any selfhood*, unless you choose to make his selfhood consist in his being such and such a receptacle, or such and such an organ, and this is not the selfhood which is commonly meant." If evil spirits "are asked what it is to have *no selfhood*, they reply that it is equivalent to having no being, and that if they were deprived of selfhood they should be nothing." The state of a man "when he is in selfhood, or believes his life to be self-derived, is like that of sleep, because while he is in it he knows no otherwise than that he lives, thinks, speaks and acts from himself."

I introduce these quotations, slightly paraphrased in one or two instances, for the purpose of still more clearly indicating the precise seat of spiritual evil. It lies in the pride of moralism, or the conceit of one's moral endowments, those endowments which make a man feel that he has an absolute or independent selfhood, and lead him therefore to make much of the differences between himself and other men.

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This is original sin, the great parental fount and origin of all the evils that desolate humanity. Here lies the great mother-fallacy at whose exuberant paps cling and feed all the minor fallacies of the universe. The sentiment of independent selfhood: the conviction of being the source of one's own good and evil: such is the sole ground of every evil known to the spiritual universe, and here accordingly we must take our stand if we wish to gain a philosophic mastery of the problems which agitate humanity.

The popular view of evil is of an extremely superficial character. Evil as commonly regarded, is of a purely moral genesis instead of a spiritual one, and consists in *the doing something or other* which justly exposes one to the Divine displeasure. The mass of people regard it merely as the breach of some actual Divine law, thus as a state of the activity more than as a state of the soul, and consequently they utterly fail to comprehend the Pauline idea, "that sin was in the world prior to the giving of the law, and reigned over those who had

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committed no actual transgression." To the vulgar apprehension, conscience, or the sentiment of responsibility, instead of being the fruit and token of a spiritual declension on the part of man from the state in which he was created, becomes an original Divine endowment of the soul, and by consequence the moral life, or the life over which this sentiment presides, is practically regarded as the highest life of man, the morally good man being *ipso facto* sure of admittance into heaven, and the morally evil man being *ipso facto* sure of exclusion from it. But all this is puerile. Conscience is the badge of a fallen nature. It is only *after* we have eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that its voice is heard investing us with responsibility. He who feels himself responsible for the good and evil which proceed from him—or feels a *property* in them—must have previously forgotten that all his life is from God, and have come to find it in himself. This is the reason why, as Swedenborg says, "he appropriates to himself all evil and falsity, which he would never do were his belief formed

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according to the real truth of the case." It is to be sure an indispensable mercy that God endow man with conscience after his spiritual declension, or his lapse into selfhood, because otherwise he must have forgotten the very name of God, and yielded himself an utter sport to every diabolic impulse. It is an inexpressibly benign spectacle to see some lusty leviathan, who would otherwise devour and consume without remorse on every side of him, bitted and bridled by this unseen and delicate Divine force, and gradually restored to human dimensions. And it is a delicious thing on the other hand to see a feebler nature, when sinking under the oppression of the malignant and the mighty, soothed and sustained and pillowed upon this unfaltering Divine witness. All this is adorable mercy, and we cannot too devoutly acknowledge it. But at the same time it is palpably true that these are phenomena of a lapsed spiritual life in man, and that conscience accordingly is only a shrouded presence of God, or a presence accommodated to that fallen condition.

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Hence it was that Christ stood in such utter hostility to the morally righteous of his day, and in such friendly relations with those whose consciences ministered condemnation to them rather than justification. These latter had attained to the true end of the law, for it was never designed as a minister of peace and reconciliation with God, but only as a voice of disunion and menace. It was never designed, according to the apostle, to give a knowledge of righteousness, but only a knowledge of sin, that *every* mouth might be stopped, and ALL THE WORLD BECOME GUILTY before God. Sin existed before the law, though of course no ground for imputing it could exist until the law had been given. For sin being a spiritual condition exclusively, or a state of the soul, it is not to be supposed that the sinner himself should be aware of his true condition, until it were divinely demonstrated to his consciousness in the phenomena of his own action. The inmost meaning and curse of sin is, that it is a lapse of spiritual consciousness, or such a blinding of one to the truth of his utter dependence

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upon God, as begets the utmost self-complacency in him, and prevents his estimating himself aright save by the contrast of the divine law. The devil has not the slightest idea of his being a sinner, but on the contrary deems himself a model of divine perfection. It is only the angel who can unfeignedly say, God be merciful to me a sinner. Although, therefore, all men alike were sinners before the giving of the law, they were *dead* in sin or unconscious of their forlorn condition, and the law supervened according to the apostle, only to quicken or vivify this condition, only to make it a state of *living* or *conscious death*. Without the law man must, in the nature of things, have remained for ever unconscious of his true condition, and for ever incapable accordingly of appreciating the divine deliverance. He could never have comprehended what the word *sin* meant (for it is only those who have been divinely extricated from its fetters, that ever do comprehend it), and consequently must always have viewed the Divine promise of redemption as a sheer impertinence. But with the law all

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this unconsciousness would vanish. The law would incessantly evoke this spiritual death into tangible, visible act, so that men, viewing themselves by its light, might fully justify God in imputing iniquity to them, and lend a faithful ear to his promises of relief. Wherefore, as the apostle reasons, the law entered not by any means to confer righteousness, but simply to give men a knowledge of the sin which otherwise they would have remained eternally unconscious of. It entered only to work wrath, only to make the offence consciously abound, so that man might thenceforth see himself as he spiritually was, full of death, and consequently yield an intelligent and grateful co-operation to the plans of the Divine mercy concerning him.

Thus the law, or conscience, testified to a lapsed condition of the human spirit, a lapse from a blissful and innocent dependence upon God to one of proud self-reliance, and they who spiritually received this testimony rejoiced of course in the reconciliation afforded by Christ. They perceived the law to be simply a peda-

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gogue, disciplining their self-love or teaching them humility, while referring their hope exclusively to the deliverance promised in the Christ. He who spiritually apprehended its import, accordingly saw that it was never intended from the first to establish any difference between men, or promote the pride of a personal righteousness, but exactly the contrary; that is, to shut up all alike, good and evil, saint and sinner, righteous and unrighteous, under sin, that the infinite divine righteousness, or that which comes by the faith of Christ, might be upon all without distinction. Such an one saw that the law was not merely intended to shut up the disobedient to condemnation, but was also most skilfully adapted to disappoint every sinister aspiration of the obedient. For if any person fancied that *he* had attained to obedience, and looked, therefore, for a special Divine blessing upon himself, his family, or his fortunes, it immediately and remorselessly baffled his insane expectation by saying, *thou shalt not covet.*

Never pedagogue, however, had duller pu-

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pils, it must be admitted. Scarcely any one at Christ's day seems to have possessed the least spiritual insight. His most devoted followers appear to have been attached by personal rather than spiritual expectations, and were utterly disconcerted, therefore, by his death. *A fortiori* of course the noble, the learned, the mighty, all those whose social position nursed the moral sentiment within them, or the sentiment of selfhood, and so inflamed their spiritual pride, were incapable of comprehending his proffered salvation, and were unaffectedly scandalized at the lavish contempt he discharged upon the most conspicuous virtue of his time. For the law convinced these men in their own estimation of righteousness, not of sin; it pronounced them, as compared with others, in a state of health, not of disease; and how blasphemous, therefore, was the pretension of a Divine mission on the part of one who thus systematically affronted the clear testimony of the Divine law! Generally how preposterous was the expectation of a Divine messenger, unless for the orderly purpose of

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ratifying existing moral distinctions among men, that is, for the purpose of glorifying the reputable Scribe and Pharisee, and excoriating the disreputable publican and harlot! Like our New England divines, these men made all sin voluntary and conscious, or viewed the law as the primal and indefeasible platform of communication between God and the soul; and they could not possibly conceive, therefore, the relevancy of a Divine mission, which transcended this platform, or went behind the law, and professed to save those who were plainly obnoxious to its curse. Wherefore briefly to end the troublesome controversy, they crucified Jesus as a blasphemer of the Divine law, and so typified the long and rigorous spiritual crucifixion he was subsequently to undergo at the hands of the reigning Ecclesiasticism.

The nominal church has long maintained the form of sound doctrine, while practically evacuating its substance. It has long obscured every characteristic feature of the evangelic antinomy, by practically converting the Christ into a subtler and, therefore, deadlier lawgiver

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than Moses, whom he superseded. It has long effaced and vacated every substantial feature of opposition between the law and the gospel, considered the one as a medium of death, the other of life, by converting the gospel itself into a mere *spiritual* legalism in place of the carnal one which it slew. That is to say, the nominal church, while affirming in words the passing away of the legal dispensation, has been all the while assiduously reconstructing that dispensation on a *religious* basis instead of a (so-called) moral one. If we follow the teaching of our divines, morality was the authentic passport under the old economy, while piety is the potent incantation under the new. They have not a doubt that the same demand is made under both administrations, namely, personal righteousness or excellence, only its ground is altered from exterior to interior excellence, which, for some inscrutable reason or other, is supposed to be of easier attainment than the other. According to the apostles, Christ was the invariable end and aim of the law for righteousness to all who truly believed in it. But

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the church fancies that the personal righteousness of the subject was the true intent of the law, and that the gospel accordingly is only a higher evolution of the same claim, demanding an interior and spiritual excellence in the subject. It is still a righteousness in one's self that God demands, only the gospel somehow provides superior resources for attaining to it than were available under the law. We are no longer bound to acquire a moral or outward righteousness, which may distinguish us in man's sight, but only an internal or spiritual one which shall distinguish us in God's sight. My love or solicitude, whose sole object in old time was my outward or natural self, is now ecclesiastically converted into a love or solicitude concerning my inner or spiritual and renewed self. And thus the principle of selfhood, which is the sole and unchangeable principle of death in man, is by no means destroyed under the ecclesiastical gospel, but only dislodged from an untenable outpost, and made to concentrate its venom in an inner citadel, in which all the batteries of heaven may play

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upon it innocuously. It has partaken the Divine chrism, and may henceforth smile at death and destruction.

It is obvious that our ecclesiasticism makes a double mistake here, evincing as unhappy a misapprehension of the law as it does of the gospel. It supposes that conscience or the law was originally intended by God as a ministry of righteousness and peace, whereas it was never so intended at all, but only as a ministry of sin and death. Consequently, there is no ground whatever for contrasting the gospel method of justification with what is called the legal method. THERE NEVER WAS ANY LEGAL METHOD OF JUSTIFICATION PROPOSED TO MAN; and after the infinite pains the apostle has taken to prove this point against his infatuated brethren, it is only downright stupidity which excuses the clergy in going on to affirm it. The apostle takes infinite pains to show that the whole spiritual or vital force of the law was death-bearing; that no one from Abraham or before Abraham, down to Jesus Christ had ever been justified by it, or was ever designed to be

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justified by it; and that it was totally and exclusively a merciful ministry of wrath, for the purpose of arousing those who were otherwise unconscious of their ruined condition by nature, and leading them to flee to the great Christian refuge. Beside this grand apostolic music, instinct and bursting with unspeakable allelulias, what a feeble twitter and squeak our modern ecclesiastical literature amounts to! That literature addresses itself to men thus: "Yes, it is true that you shall no longer be admitted to heaven on the score of your mere moral differences from other men, or those differences which are obvious to outward sight, but only on the score of certain interior or spiritual differences seen by God. Thus a man may even be a great sinner to carnal estimation, or in the judgment of men, while to the Divine apprehension he shall be odorous with sanctity. The deadly evil under the evangelical dispensation accordingly is the distrust of one's spiritual self, or the doubt of one's inward acceptableness to God. Never yield therefore for a moment to this temptation. It is the very engine and battering-ram of

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Satan. Admit your *natural* sinfulness *usque ad nauseam*, confess that your natural heart is the abode of every unclean beast: but stick to the renewed heart within you, or to that inward and spiritual difference which has been wrought in you, through the abounding grace of Christ, and you may safely set all hell at defiance."

Now nothing can be farther from the temper of the gospel than this entire strain of tuition. It is only the heart untaught of God, which fancies that it is Divinely differenced *in itself* from others. The regenerate man or angel never sees, nor ever desires to see throughout eternity, any evidence of a Divine goodness towards himself, greater than that which is incessantly exhibited towards every devil in hell. "Every one now-a-days," says Swedenborg, "believes that evils and falses in man become utterly shaken off and abolished, while he is regenerating, so as that when he is perfectly regenerated nothing of either remains, but he is pure and righteous, like one washed and purified by water. But this sentiment is most false, since no evil or falsity can be so shaken

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off as to be abolished, but whatever has been hereditarily derived to us from infancy, or acquired by our own activity, remains. Thus man, notwithstanding his having been regenerated, is altogether evil and false, as is shown to the life by souls after death. The truth of this position is evident, when we consider that there is nothing of good or truth in man but what comes from the Lord, and that all the falsity and evil of humanity flow from *selfhood*, so that no man, or spirit, or angel could help, if left for a moment to himself, rushing incontinently into infernal evil. This is why it is said in the Word, that heaven is not pure. This the angels acknowledge, and whoso does not acknowledge it cannot be of them."

The devil, or *de*generate man, cannot understand this, because he believes in God only in subordination to himself, only as endowing and decorating him with a personal superiority to other men. And the man whose hope of heaven is deliberately poised, not upon the sheer and mere mercy of God, but upon the conviction of his being in himself a better man

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either inwardly or outwardly than Judas Iscariot, Benedict Arnold, or Cæsar Borgia, is in full though unconscious sympathy with that infatuated temper. For no rich man goes to heaven. Until you see a camel pass through the eye of a needle, which is a physical impossibility, you will see no spiritually rich man enter heaven. It is only your spiritual tatterdemalion and starveling that can comprehend or pardon courtesies so gratuitous, and hospitalities so disinterested, as belong to that superior region. Your rich man has never been accustomed to buy wine and milk without money and without price, and cheerfully betakes himself therefore to societies where virtue is appreciated, and where people who give tithes of all they possess, and fast twice in the week, are somewhat differently estimated from these bankrupt publicans.

The reigning ecclesiasticism accordingly has given rise to an infinitely subtler moralism, an infinitely deadlier Pharisaism, than that which Jesus encountered in the flesh. You stood a chance of silencing the ancient legalist, by

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pointing to the Resurrection as the conclusive refutation of his personal claims. But the modern legalist adroitly forestalls this reference, having already accepted the great Christian fact as the formal *exequatur* of his own complacent pretensions. The ancient legalist slew the Christ for pronouncing the most righteous men of his day and nation an abhorrence to God. The modern legalist fancies that Christ thus denounced the current righteousness, only because it was not great enough in degree, being a mere surface-righteousness, and that he would have been most happy all the while to acknowledge that interior or spiritual righteousness, by which one man is *truly* distinguished from another in the Divine sight. Thus Christ is made a mere pander to human pride, and that very principle of selfhood in man which nailed him to the accursed tree, has managed, by hypocritically donning his livery, or baptizing itself in His name, to gain the unquestioned ecclesiastical dominion of the earth.

What is the Christian gospel ? If you listen to its sectarian expositors, you will be at

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a great loss to gather any precise knowledge of it. It seems on the whole to be formulated thus: whoso believes on Jesus Christ shall be saved, whoso believes not shall be damned. But as to who Jesus Christ is, and as to what he has done to entitle him to one's belief, much more to one's hearty love and submission, you will find an indefinite amount of dubious and contradictory doctrine. The apostolic doctrine on the other hand is very uniform and clear. If we look into the evangelists, and into the apostolic epistles to the churches, we shall find that the gospel, to their imagination, centred exclusively about the great fact of the Resurrection of Christ. I presume that none of them enjoyed more than a most imperfect glimpse of the endless spiritual contents of that transaction, just as I presume that no angel will be able to all eternity to reap more than a superficial acquaintance with the infinite treasures of goodness and wisdom implied in it. But evidently this was the fact of facts, round which clustered all the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and out of which grew every motive of Christian as-

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piration and obedience. The Resurrection of Christ was to them the evidence and the seal of a great fact accomplished, that is to say, of *a great victory achieved over death and hell*, and *the consequent redemption of universal man from its dominion.* Thus the Resurrection was to them a great *rational* fact, or a fact with an immense practical bearing upon the universe. We moderns, on the other hand, see in it only the exhibition of an arbitrary divine power, communicated to Christ for the purpose of distinguishing him personally above other men, and so commending him to our sensuous or enforced homage and wonderment.

The apostles never confounded Redemption with Salvation. They looked forward with blissful confidence to salvation, but it was only because they could look back with blissful gratitude to the precedent and greater fact of Redemption. The work of Christ which inflamed their rational zeal, was not a future work, was not the work of their own personal salvation, strictly speaking, for some of them professed themselves ready almost to renounce this, if

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thereby they might bring their brethren to the excellent knowledge of the gospel. It was a past work of God, a work of *redemption*, a work which displayed the goodness of God and the wisdom of God, and the power of God, in lineaments of unmatched and unimaginable perfection. Without doubt they looked to Christ with joyful confidence of their personal salvation, that is to say of their intimate and eternal exemption from the dominion of evil, but *this confidence was altogether begotten of the gospel*, that is to say, grew out of the stupendous mercy which God had already exhibited towards all mankind, in descending to carnal conditions, and by the suffering of temptations thence derived, eternally subjugating all that spiritual wickedness in high places which interfered with human sanity, and turned the earth more and more continually into a pandemonium. It was this great mercy, most surely avouched by the Resurrection of Christ without undergoing corruption, which stimulated their boundless love of God, which broke the arms of their rebellion, and made them joyfully commit their

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souls—their hope of an eternal personal salvation—to his holy keeping. They willingly thenceforth renounced the legal hope of justification, and saw in the frowning lineaments of the law only the radiant face of the gospel.

But the church, ecclesiastically viewed, has forgotten all this lore. It is possessed by the idea that the law or conscience is and ever was the sole bond of union between God and the soul, and it is thus inhibited seeing any thing more in the gospel than a new ratification of the law. It does not regard man as brought by the gospel into a relation towards God which is disowned of the law; on the contrary it regards him as brought by it into a relation of strictly legal obedience, which under the influence of the law alone had somehow been previously impossible. Thus the law is still the gainer by the gospel, the way by which we are brought nearer to God by the latter being merely the way of a spiritual-legal obedience, instead of a carnal-legal one.

I have no doubt whatever that this ecclesiastical obtuseness has grown out of a necessity

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of the human mind, and I do not quarrel with it therefore: I only distinctly affirm it. It was entirely impossible that the spiritual force of the gospel could be discerned in Christ's day, and it was therefore inevitable that the Jewish legalism should become gradually filtered and defecated through the Christian ecclesiasticism, before the divine features of the gospel could be worthily apprehended. I will make my meaning clear enough on this point before the close of my Letter; at present I wish to keep your attention fixed for a little while longer upon the dishonor the church has always done to God's redeeming love, by its carnal and imperfect conception of the gospel.

For this purpose let us glance at the three great historic moments of ecclesiasticism, and observe the modified form under which each has reproduced the error of its predecessor. Romanism, Protestantism, and Unitarianism or Rationalism, are only so many variations of one and the same original air, the second being simply a florid reaction or return upon the first, and the third a still more florid reaction upon

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the second. Roman Catholicism regarding Christ's work as insufficient to reunite man with God, or what is the same thing, being utterly blind to the great spiritual redemption he had accomplished, proceeded to crucify him spiritually, by interposing the priestly viaticum as of indispensable obligation. No man could draw near to God whom holy Church had not blessed, and any man might draw near unhindered by any leaven of deviltry, however active, whom she *had* blessed. This was the simplest form of the error, and in a spiritual though not secular point of view, the most harmless. For still some reverence was spiritually saved to man. The difference between the believer's lot and that of others, was not a difference *in himself*, it was the difference of Church and no Church. The reason why one man went to heaven, and another to hell, was, not that one spiritually received the gospel, and the other rejected it; but that the former had been blessed by the Church, and the latter not. I presume there could have been no great harm in this statement, provided a true notion of the

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Church had obtained, as importing the regenerate life of man. But such was not the prevalent notion. The Church meant the visible corporation whose head dwelt at Rome, in the person possibly of some remorseless libertine, while its inferior members were made up of the swarming monks and friars, whose filthy frocks consecrated more vice and idleness than went unwhipped any where else in the universe. Protestantism was unquestionably right therefore in desecrating such a Church, and abjuring its blessing.

But Protestantism was itself blind to the great work of Redemption, or still maintained the insufficiency of Christ's work to reunite the soul to God, by postulating the necessity or obligation of a spiritual change in man before partaking his favor. It indeed maintained the sufficiency of Christ's work, *as against the Romish pretension of the Church's mediation*, and did society a capital service in emancipating it from the odious incubus of Priestcraft. But as to any *absolute* sufficiency of that work, it remained itself hopelessly in the dark. Thus

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it broke the yoke of the Church, but it by no means admitted us to the freedom of God's house. For it immediately proceeded to allege that, however invalid and superfluous in God's sight the distinction *which the Church confers* undoubtedly is, still another distinction is to the last degree imperative, and this is a distinction conferred by the Holy Spirit. The idea of Protestantism is, that redemption and salvation are one and the same process, or that a man becomes a beneficiary of Christ, becomes a partaker of the Christian redemption, only in so far as he becomes spiritually a different man from what he was before, or from what other less favored men are at present. Thus the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit become utterly confounded. In fact, instead of freely bestowing the Spirit upon all the world, through the great work of redemption which he accomplished, he becomes converted into its obedient servant and vassal, blessing those only whom it has previously blessed, and renouncing those only whom it has previously renounced.

Thus Protestantism turns the gospel upside

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down, and makes Jesus no longer a redeemer of sinners "pure and simple," but only of sanctified sinners, or such as have been previously turned to God by the discerning operation of His Spirit. And thus of course it leaves as broad a platform for the display of human pride as ever existed under the Law. For I take it there is no flattery so penetrating and exquisite as that which persuades me that God deals with me in a special or exclusive way, and is fashioning my private selfhood into a form which shall eternally distinguish me from the ordinary lot. The pure gospel of redemption affronts my pride, because it ranks me on a par valuation with the vulgar herd, by showing me that it is only as a pure unmixed sinner that I am accepted in Christ, and by no means as a sanctified sinner. And the Protestant ecclesiastical gospel allays this affront by telling me, that God is working a change in me which shall eternally elevate me above the level of sinners, and make the exhibition of His personal favor to me rigidly appropriate. In short, the Protestant gospel diverts our attention from the

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evangelic testimony concerning the all-sufficiency of Christ's work to reconcile us to God, and fixes it instead upon the obscure and oftentimes profoundly obscene depths of our own spirits, to see what witness of the Divine Spirit may be dimly struggling there. This is a race in which emphatically success belongs only to the swift, and a battle in which victory is always to the strong. Those who are naturally modest and humble will watch the fatuous depths of their own spirit for ever, before they see any reason to believe God more alert and astir with them than their neighbors. And those who by nature are forward and conceited have no need to watch at all, for the assurance of their high vocation is already connate with them, and unhappily requires no deepening. Hence we discern every where in Protestantism an undue elation or an undue depression, an immense spiritual insolence, or a deplorable spiritual timidity, bound together by an interval of complete and apparently very comfortable theological indifference.

The gospel, indeed, very clearly affirms a

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distinction between the disciples of Christ and those who reject him, that is, between the regenerate and unregenerate. But in the gospel this distinction commences only on the *hither* side of the Christian redemption, and never on the thither side ; that is to say, it dates altogether from the indwelling of Christ himself in the disciple, and never from any spiritual discipline preparatory to such indwelling. Regeneration in the gospel is set down as an exclusive *fruit* of the redemption which Christ has wrought, and is never by the remotest possibility represented as conducing or contributing to, much less constituting, that redemption. It *presupposes* our reconciliation to God, or our redemption from the interior tyranny of evil, and hence utterly discharges us from all preliminary obligation to make ourselves acceptable to him. We are already perfectly accepted in Christ, Jew and Gentile, Christian and Mohammedan, saint and sinner alike, and all we need to do is to keep ourselves in mind of this stupendous mercy, and allow it to bring forth in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It gives the

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angel, says the profound Swedenborg, neither terror nor discomfort to perceive at any time, that *in himself or intrinsically* he is and for ever will be intimately related to the most infernal natures. Why should it? For the angel believes the gospel, believes that Christ has utterly overcome the dominion of evil, or rendered it eternally subordinate and subservient to good, and that it consequently can have no power to harm us but what we ourselves voluntarily and systematically afford it. The gospel accordingly makes the Holy Spirit a free gift of Christ to all mankind, or a purchase of his sufferings and glorification. Protestantism turns it into an exclusive possession of certain persons who are diligently exercised with religious hopes and fears, and hence into a religio-legal basis upon which one man is approved and another condemned by God. Unitarianism may certainly be pardoned for rejecting a gospel so niggardly as this.

But unhappily, Unitarianism not content with this, proceeds to plunge into still more devious ways. It utters indeed a manly pro-

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test against the conception of the infinitely Merciful and Just, bestowing a necessary preliminary qualification for His favor upon some of His dependent creatures, and not upon others. But how does it proceed itself hereupon to adjust matters? Does it proceed to prove Christ a universal redeemer, both of those who are legally near and those who are far off? Does it, in other words, simply reallege the Gospel? By no means. On the contrary it goes behind Christ to deny the original postulate of the Fall, so excluding any necessity for a divine descent to man, by levelling man up to God. Thus Unitarian Rationalism approximates man to God, by vacating Christianity as a *supernatural* method of salvation; or what is the same thing, by reducing Christ to merely human dimensions, and so reconstructing a purely natural basis of intercourse between God and man. This is tantamount to curing hunger by pronouncing starvation impossible, and the demand for nourishment premature and illusory. Unitarianism is thus a fearful anachronism. It is nothing more nor

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less than a revivification of the old Paganism, with its sentence of death suspended, and the hue of a wan and wintry life substituted instead. Paganism is good in its place, because it looks assiduously forward to something better to ensue. But take it out of its place, give it the name and the dress of that better thing which is to come, and it becomes to all who fixedly persuade themselves of its truth, a most hurtful masquerade, palsying the Divine grasp of the soul, or chilling the energy of regeneration at its very source. This is the exact infirmity of Unitarianism, that it baptizes nature, that it pours its consecrating oil upon the natural selfhood, and bids it aspire to immortal bliss. It is thus preëminently an obscuration of Christian truth. There can be no question that the ranks of Unitarianism include as much moral or personal worth as those of any other sect, and none of the sects indeed are deficient in such worth. But the extremest moral or personal worth is quite consistent with an intense spiritual hostility to the Divine Name, and Unitarianism viewed simply as an intellec-

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tual system, seems to me preëminently adapted to obviate all suspicion of this truth, and to lull the soul nursed in social decorum to the most fatal of slumbers. Viewed intellectually, it is a religion adapted only to cultivated people, people in whom their essential nakedness is effectually veiled by the fig-leaves of natural good, and who worship God on the same impulse of æsthetic obligation, and with the same sense of vital aloofness, as characterize their admiration of a fine landscape or a beautiful flower.

Thus, as we have seen, Romanism defeats the gospel of Christ, by imposing the burden of an ecclesiastical righteousness on the soul. Protestantism in its turn defeats it by imposing the previous obligation of an *inward conversion from evil to good in the substance of the self-hood:* a conversion which is not only impossible in the nature of things, or which, if it were possible, would turn the human selfhood into God, but is also void even of an apparent warrant in Scripture: for the Scriptures invariably represent man's spiritual change, or regenera-

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tion, as contingent upon the great work of Redemption accomplished by Christ, and by no means as identical with, or preparatory to, that consummate work. And finally, Unitarianism defeats it by exhausting its necessity, or denying any insuperable discrepancy between the Divine and human natures; so turning the gospel into a mere sentimental or expurgated edition of the Law, an edition with the terrible music of Sinai left out. And thus viewed altogether, these three ecclesiastical diversities combine in one great antichristian unveracity, which brings good tidings to many a fold unblessed of the Divine Shepherd, and offers a message of peace in many places where the gospel itself would only prove a cartel of defiance.

I am aware that nothing can be easier for thoughtless people, than to charge me with endeavoring "to weaken the force of moral obligation," and so forth. I hope I shall be amply able to satisfy all reasonable scruples on this head before I shall have done. Meanwhile the attentive reader will observe that I have said

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no word in abatement of moral obligation, the equal and indefeasible obligation of every man to observe the ten commandments. My entire argument presupposes this obligation in full force, some persons rendering it a systematic obedience, and others a systematic neglect. Upon these *data* I simply say that the former class of persons, do not by their obedience acquire any *merit* in the Divine sight over the opposite class, since both classes alike have been already placed by the work of Christ in a perfectly unitary relation to God, and are hence exempted from every obligation but that of gratitude and *loving* devotion. He who supposes himself bound to acquire a title to the Divine favor, and for this purpose counts upon his moral or religious character, only proves that he is still uninstructed in the gospel of Christ, or incredulous of the mercy recorded there. He has not only never heard of that great spiritual lapse of man, which is usually denominated the Fall, being overcome in the redemption effected by Christ, and of man's consequent restoration to the Divine image and

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favor, but he also evidently discredits the very existence of the Fall. For he supposes himself really able by something he does to distinguish himself in the Divine eyes, or qualify himself for the Divine favor. And what is this but to exhibit the identical spirit or temper of the Fall, which consists in the persuasion of our having an independent selfhood, and the pride of superiority which follows such persuasion? Thus this legal frame of mind, this pretension to be distinguished in the Divine sight by any thing we can do, is a most pointed affront to the gospel, because it proves in any particular case the natural enmity of the heart which it is the gospel office to subdue, still unabated, and practically dismisses Christ unthanked. In fact, it is precisely this spiritual state of man, a state of *apparent* life in himself, but of *real* death, which Conscience or the Law was designed to bring into relief, for the purpose of shutting us up to despair of our own righteousness, and to boundless hope in the Divine. And he accordingly who under the blessed light of the gospel persists in cherishing that temper,

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not merely misconceives the gospel, but makes himself also utterly accursed of the Law. He despises the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, and *a fortiori* of course eternally removes himself from the pale of the Christian salvation.

Let us glance for a moment at the operation of Conscience.

Conscience, or the moral law, has two tables or aspects: one towards God, another towards man; one literal, the other spiritual; one revealing the duties we owe to our fellow-man or society, the other revealing the spirit from which these duties flow. One of these tables says simply, *Thou shalt not covet, steal, murder*, and so forth. Now if I obey these requisitions exactly and sincerely, I shall undoubtedly merit the esteem of my fellow-men, and the society which should fail to honor such desert, would confess itself far gone in corruption. But now suppose me on the ground of this unquestionable social desert, aspiring also after the Divine plaudit: suppose me honestly expecting on the ground of my admitted moral superiority to

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others, a special Divine blessing upon my health, my enterprise, my family relations, or whatever else that blessing is usually associated with. In that case the other table of the law comes into play. In that case the higher and spiritual aspect of the Law or conscience, asserts itself, saying: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength:* how comes it therefore that you expect to be rewarded for doing no injustice to your brother? Can you not abstain from murder, theft, adultery, lying, out of love to God, or the infinite opposite good? Must your abstinence from these evils be moved solely by the hope of gain, or the desire of recompense? In that case, it is clear that your virtue is totally destitute of spiritual ground, being vivified only by self-love."

Now, manifestly, every man who cherishes a sense of *merit* towards God, on the ground of his moral or religious differences from other men, incurs this rebuke. Every man who supposes that the Holy Ghost is to be purchased by any thing he can do in the way of moral or

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religious obedience, affronts the inmost spirit of the law, no less than the palpable face of the gospel. The spirit of the law is a spirit of love to God and love to man, and this spirit is not to be acquired by any amount of obedience and sacrifice with a view to obtain it, but purely by the free gift of God through the redemption effected by Christ. No fancy can be so puerile, therefore, as that which leads us to think that we are going by our moral or ecclesiastical or other observances of any sort, to induce a more clement regard upon God towards us, than that which he exhibits towards all mankind. It is a fancy which we may tolerate in our children, for their minds are still undeveloped and carnal, and their tender spiritual understanding requires a rude and crude envelope or husk, to protect it in contact with the world. But for us maturer folk, for us who call ourselves the church of Christ on earth, we should be ashamed so to misconceive the facts of history, and stultify both law and gospel.

For if we have ever read history without ecclesiastical spectacles, we perfectly know that

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the law was designed to minister to the gospel. That is to say, it was designed, while perfectly subserving the uses of human society or fellowship, to bring into relief the immense spiritual lapse or interval which separates man from God, and so commend to his hope the redemption which descends exclusively from God out of heaven. It is specifically designed in its higher aspect to testify to this great fact of a SPIRITUAL FALL of man, and by no manner of means to provide a ladder by which that fall might be overcome. He, therefore, who turns it into such a ladder, or finds it a witness of life instead of death to him, evidently eludes its palpable significance, and as evidently puts himself in equal measure out of relation to the gospel promise. To secure life from the law, spiritual life, or what is the same thing, to evade its spiritual curse, the subject is bound to perform its duties for their own sake alone, or without any eye to reward, that is to say from a supreme love to God and his neighbor. And this love of course was a simple impossibility until the consequences of the fall, or the

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feeling of enmity and alienation which that state continually engendered on the part of man, had been perfectly and for ever overcome by the stupendous mercy of the Divine Incarnation and subsequent Glorification.

These great events eat up the consequences of the Fall, or destroy every obstacle which before existed to the most intimate conjunction of God and man. The fall impaired man's spiritual freedom, by giving the infernal or lower element of his consciousness preponderance over the higher or celestial element, so inclining his steps to hell. The redemption effected by Christ, or the restoration of equilibrium to the spiritual world wrought by his manly and majestic suffering, placed man's freedom upon a securer basis than it had known before, a basis of course which can never be lost or forfeited to all eternity, and so permits man again freely to love God and his neighbor, and bring forth the ripest and richest fruits of love. A claim of merit under the Christian dispensation accordingly is extremely preposterous. For the Christian truth means

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neither more nor less than THE RESTORATION OF AN ENTIRELY UNITARY RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN; means neither more nor less than *the abrogation of that distance or separation between them,* which the Fall expresses, and which conscience or the Law only witnesses or avouches; *and the consequent unimpeded inflow of the Divine love and benediction to every one without distinction, good and evil, saint and sinner,* who is willing to receive it.

For us Christians, then, to talk of desert, or to conceive of the Divine favor as contingent upon any merit in us over other men, is simply "to forget the rock whence we were hewn," or to forget, in other words, that we are a NEW CREATION in Christ Jesus, *created unto every good work that our heart or head inclines us to pursue.* We are no longer servants, but sons, and the son does not feel himself related to the father by desert or merit, but by want, by infirmity, by essential dependence, and a confidence which is bounded only by the father's truth.

Christianity is the doctrine of the eternal

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and perfect union of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ. The eternal Father did not take upon him an angelic nature, for He was already in sympathy with angels and able to minister to all their necessities: He took upon him the nature of man on earth, a nature so corrupted by the love of self and the love of the world that all its primal brightness was obscured, and He had no longer any means of understanding its wants, or of sympathizing with its fearful sorrows: He took upon Him a body born of woman, and she, in all probability as to her natural characteristics, one of the basest of her kind,* in order that by this fruit of her

* Nothing so clearly expresses the formal divorce of the Romish Hierarchy from the common sense of the skies, as the decree they have recently fulminated in deification of the Virgin Mary, or in vindication of that person's immaculate conception. This prodigious stupidity, long foreshadowed and at length formally accomplished, announces the culmination or *ne plus ultra* of falsity in that branch of our ecclesiasticism, snaps the thin umbilical connection which still bound it to the long-suffering maternal heavens, gives the *coup de grace* to any tolerance it may have hitherto enjoyed with men or angels, and utters a solicitous invitation to all mankind to come and bury it in ignominious oblivion.

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womb He might put his finger upon the pulse of the lowest hell, and eternally assuage the fires of its otherwise implacable lusts. Henceforth, then, so far as God Himself is concerned all men are in like propinquity to Him. He stands, and for ever will stand, as tenderly related to the lowest devil in hell as to the most seraphic angel in heaven; and to compassionate the devil, therefore, under the impression that he is at all prejudiced at the Divine hand, is to do a flagrant outrage to the truth of the Divine Natural Humanity. He who, out of an hundred sheep loses one, loves the one which is lost more than the ninety and nine which had never strayed: and so we are bound to conceive of the Divine love in its direction towards hell, becoming swathed and penetrated and intenerated, so to speak, by an accessory pity, which would be misplaced towards heaven, but which yearns over the lost with the unspeakable tenderness of a mother yearning over the weak or imbecile or deformed offspring of her own bowels.

I have now explained my meaning with

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sufficient distinctness, I presume, but I would like to signalize still more clearly, if possible, the error of the existing ecclesiasticism. We have already seen in some measure how it misapprehends both the Law and the Gospel: let us say a few additional words upon the latter topic.

It misapprehends the Law as we have seen in supposing it to have been originally given for the purpose of imputing righteousness instead of sin, for the purpose of conferring justification instead of condemnation. And it misapprehends the gospel in supposing it to have come in upon the failure of the Law, as a substitute for it, as another and easier law having Faith for its principle of righteousness instead of Works. It supposes that the curse of man under the legal dispensation was, not that he *could* not obey God, but only that he *would* not, and that the Gospel, therefore, was designed to be such an exhibition of the Divine love as would melt this stubborn will in man, and reduce him to obedience. Thus the Gospel ecclesiastically proves a mere succedaneum, or

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subordinate economy, to the Law, designed to quicken the principle of legal obedience in man, and so bring him to acceptance with God. And all the fine things accordingly that are said by prophets, and evangelists, and apostles, in regard to the essential priority of the Promise to the Law, or the intrinsic subordination of the latter, fall to the ground, and the blessed Promise itself being held forth as another Law, or as a reward instead of an incitement to Faith, becomes converted into a new and subtler ministry of death. But let me be more explicit.

The gospel tells us of a work of Christ in which all men are alike interested, whether they believe it or not, a great work of redemption by which universal man is released from spiritual death, the death which he incurs in Adam or by natural inheritance, and again put in the freest and fullest contact with the Spirit of God. This death in man, this spiritual death, was so absolute, that he was wholly unconscious of it, save in so far as it was continually kept alive by the operation of the Divine Law, or

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conscience : and even then he had so little apprehension of the spiritual force of conscience or the law, as completely to mistake its intention, and pervert it to the use of his carnal pride. In fact, all mankind was becoming so utterly sunken in spiritual death, becoming so utterly helpless a prey to the influences of evil from the spiritual world, that their spiritual freedom was well nigh extinct, and what are called "*spiritual possessions*" began to abound. That is to say evil spirits had become empowered to enter into the natural consciousness of man, and drive them to the execution of the filthiest and most damnable lusts at their pleasure. Thus the access of the Divine Spirit to man was becoming cut off, and man himself, universal man, was rapidly tending to utter disorganization and destruction.

In this state of things when all hope in man was dead, the Divine himself brought deliverance. God became manifest in flesh, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and by thus undergoing the extremest temptations of evil, of which otherwise He was wholly unsusceptible

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and ignorant, and successively overcoming them, He reduced the spiritual universe to order—eternal order—and so opened a pathway, never again to be obstructed, for the freest communication of His Spirit to man. HE REDUCED THE HELLS, *equally with the heavens*, TO HIS OBEDIENCE, and hence secured spiritual freedom to the evil man as well as the good for ever. REDEMPTION FROM THE POWER OF EVIL, OR HELL, *was thus the burden of the gospel.* The spiritual life or freedom which man had forfeited in Adam, or by lapse into selfhood, became restored in the second Adam, or the Lord from heaven, and the eternal consequence was not merely that the well-disposed man might henceforth follow his heavenward inclinations without gratuitous embarrassment, but also that the ill-disposed man might pursue his infernal inclinations without coercion, or simply at the beck of such delight as they freely afforded. Hence the Gospel was glad tidings to all mankind, though of course it is only the spiritually upright who will care for them. It was the proclamation of a great and eternal redemption

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effected by God for all mankind from the power of Evil, or Satan, so that henceforth any one that pleased, the lowest devil in hell, as well as the highest angel in heaven, might realize the fulness of the Divine help, and go on if he pleased to the uninterrupted enjoyment of eternal life. Of course the lowest devil in hell would be wholly unlikely to appreciate the boon, but the boon was perfectly accorded at all events ; and he himself accordingly in the sinuous depths of his own iniquity, will be its actual and unceasing, though ungrateful and unconscious, beneficiary throughout all eternity.

It was this stupendous fact of Redemption and At-one-ment, which entitled the gospel to be proclaimed to all mankind without distinction. For all men had enjoyed a preparation for it equally with the Jew, in the universal ministry of conscience. The Sinai law was only an external presentation of conscience, was only an outward exhibition of that internal law which God writes on every heart of man. And in order to show that this internal law was never designed to give man peace or rest *in himself*,

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but only to stimulate his hope and desire towards God, the outward transcript of it fashioned upon Sinai, "never made the comer thereunto perfect," but kept him personally at a hopeless distance, by imposing upon him a burdensome ceremonial of cleansings and sacrifices, which, far from taking away the conscience of sin, perpetually kept it in remembrance. Into the inner tabernacle or holy of holies, under the law, the high priest alone went once every year, NOT WITHOUT BLOOD, *which he offered for himself and the errors of the people*, the Holy Spirit signifying thereby, that the way into the holy of holies was not open so long as the first tabernacle remained standing, or what is the same thing, so long as the Divine worship consisted of gifts and sacrifices on the part of the worshipper, which could not appease the inward voice of conscience, since they all plainly evinced an undiminished spirit of self-love in his bosom, and could therefore at most confer only a ritual and carnal righteousness. But Christ being come, a high priest of better because spiritual things, has entered at once into

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the real holy of Holies, or heavenly sanctuary, which is the presence of God, HAVING OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION FOR US, so purging our conscience from an activity which ministered nothing but death, to serve henceforth the God of life.

Paul accordingly spared no pains to show the Jew that the Law had never been given with the remotest intention to confer righteousness, *since even that carnal and typical righteousness* which grew out of the ceremonial observances connected with it, BEING INVARIABLY RATIFIED BY BLOOD, utterly forbade the worshipper to suppose that it was a righteousness in himself which was in question. The law allowed him no remission without shedding of blood. That is to say, its invariable sentence upon him was DEATH, not life. And hence its testimony was direct and clear to the need of some divine offering, by which the remembrance of sin should be for ever put away from before God, and the very chief of sinners be inspired with boldness to enter into the heavenly holy of holies. We can easily comprehend therefore

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how in the eyes of this enlightened apostle, the gospel of Jesus seemed the *exclusive and very* power of God to the salvation of all that believed it.

But the reigning ecclesiasticism misapprehends all this. It has not the slightest idea of Christianity holding forth an *absolute* blessing to man on the part of God, or a blessing quite irrespective of his own activity, but only a *contingent* one, or a blessing conditioned upon the faith of the worshipper. It does not view the gospel as importing that now by the redemption effected in Christ, universal man is released from spiritual death, the death he incurs in Adam or by natural generation, and again put in the freest and fullest contact with the Spirit of God. It views it as importing merely a prospective release from death, and a prospective reconciliation with God, for certain persons who shall perform a certain work of faith toward Christ. And hence if you read the didactic performances of our leading ecclesiastical teachers, you will find extremely little stress laid on Christ's work, compared with the im-

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portance attributed to the appropriating act of faith, and the various pious exercises, by which the believer realizes the advantages of that work. And hence also you will be able to account for a total stultification of the gospel, in the prevalence of a very cruel and direful persuasion in the church as to the perilous distance which Pagans and Mahometans and others are under with respect to God, as compared with Christians.

There can be no doubt that the work of Redemption which Christ effected, and is more and more effecting to all eternity, is strictly in order to another work, namely, the reconciliation or propitiation of the human heart to God. The gospel furnishes indeed the great and sole apostolic argument to such reconciliation or propitiation. The apostles perceived it to be in truth THE VERY POWER OF GOD to salvation. They did not go forward like our preachers, to tell men of a certain mercy held forth in Christ, provided they will do something, much or little, to entitle themselves to it. They told them OF A STUPENDOUS MERCY ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED,

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in their deliverance from the spiritual death which they were subject to by nature, of a mercy therefore which could never be undone to all eternity, and they besought them BY THIS MERCY EXCLUSIVELY to present themselves a living and loving sacrifice to God. These are the spiritual sacrifices with which God is well pleased, because they enable Him to endow His creature with His own intimate blessedness to all eternity. Let us then imitate the apostles in proclaiming to all men the Divine Mercy as exhibited in the gospel of Jesus, and conjuring them by that mercy to bring forth, and abound in, all the fruits of righteousness. There can be no impropriety, but exactly the contrary in doing this, for now by the work of Christ the Spirit of God is freely given to all men, and no possible obstacle either inward or outward exists to the intensest possible spiritual conjunction with God on the part of any human being, who honestly aspires to such conjunction.

But there is foul impropriety in narrowing the area of the Divine *redemption*, or in representing the comfort of the gospel, as properly

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contingent upon the attainment of salvation, instead of being strictly conducive and ministerial to that end. My individual salvation, or my intimate and spiritual conjunction with God, is possible only because I, in common with all men, have been previously and Divinely redeemed from death, the spiritual death to which I was naturally devoted; and it is to the last degree childish and absurd, therefore, to confound these thoroughly distinct interests. The blessing of the gospel, which is redemption, is divinely free to all mankind. It has no exclusive application. But salvation of course belongs only to those who believe this gospel, or who, being moved by the stupendous love it displays on the part of God towards fallen man, is cordially begotten to reciprocal love on his own part, and in the strength of that love puts away his evils of life. His belief saves him, and his disbelief damns him, only because the armory of the Divine Love furnishes no similar weapon capable of subduing the heart of his rebellion. But the gospel itself is freely offered to all the world, and can be understood as well

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by one man as another. It was designed to be preached every where, in heaven and in hell alike, without stint as to its merciful contents; and the preacher who dares to interpose the slightest preliminary condition for its reception, proves himself profoundly unintelligent, and therefore profoundly unfit to minister in divine things.

The reason why the believer is saved, and the disbeliever condemned, is no way arbitrary. The Lord Jesus Christ has no better will towards one than the other, and would save both with equal readiness, if mere good will were concerned in the process. But salvation is not an outward or absolute process, as redemption is. It is a regenerative process, or one which takes place only by the spiritual privity and consent of the subject, and consists in his putting away the evils of his life freely, or from a feeling of love towards God. Now this love is not what the mathematicians call a *surd*, or irrational quantity. It is on the contrary a strictly *proportionate* expression to a certain lovableness on the part of God; and this lovableness is

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only worthily evinced in the gospel of Jesus, the gospel of universal Redemption. There is no gospel of universal salvation, for in the nature of things that event is contingent upon human will; but the gospel tells of a universal redemption, and consequent At-one-ment, for man, accomplished by the humiliation of God to carnal conditions, and His subsequent glorification, and makes that redemption and atonement the all powerful plea to man to lay hold on salvation, by putting away his evils of life as sins against the Divine love. If therefore you tell men that they will be saved by believing on Christ, or damned by not believing, they will never be able to comprehend you, or give you any rational credence, unless you tell them beforehand what Christ has done to entitle him to belief; unless, in other words, you present them the pure gospel quite undefiled by the filth of their own merits.

Let me try to put my finger still more nearly upon the very centre and heart of our ecclesiastical corruption of the gospel. The work of Christ is represented in Scripture as of uni-

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versal efficacy to redeem man from death, the death which he encounters in Adam or by nature, and which therefore can only be *avouched* not *inflicted*, by the Law. The ecclesiastical idea on the other hand is, that death is a Divine infliction upon man in consequence of a violation of the law, and that the gospel comes in only to obviate this vengeful consequence. The various orthodox churches teach, as we have seen, that the law was the original bond of intercourse between God and man, and that man having violated the bond, Christ was sent on the part of God to expiate such violation, and so permit God to be pleased with man. In this way the obstacle to man's salvation is removed from man himself, and put upon God. This obstacle accordingly consists in a certain extreme holiness on the part of God, which forbids Him to tolerate any thing but a perfect obedience on the part of a creature, whom He all the while most intimately knows *to be incapable of any obedience at all, perfect or imperfect, which is underived from Himself;* and compels Him for lack of such obedience to im-

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brue His hands in that creature's blood. In this state of things—the conception of which is unparalleled even in Heathendom—Christ is represented as having been sent to mediate between the offended and offending parties. How is his mediation made effectual? Why, he consents to undergo a certain amount of suffering equivalent or possibly superior to that which was justly due from God to those who had violated his law, and God consents on that ground to bless—whom? all mankind, freely or without distinction? by no means, but—such as believe on Christ! The suffering of Christ was quite equal if not superior to that which all mankind would have endured, had the curse of God's vindictive holiness overtaken them without impediment: yet the Divine mercy is still of so lurid and sullen a type, that it does not thereupon gladly leap forth to hug all mankind to its bosom, but still interposes conditions and limitations which it knows can be fulfilled by only an inconsiderable minority of the race, so leaving the vast mass to suffer in their own persons precisely as though Christ had never

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suffered at all. This is by no means an exaggerated sketch of the orthodox theology.

A theological scheme like this does not invite argumentative refutation. It invites rather the condign contempt and indignation of every reverent and religious mind, and I do not adduce it for any other purpose, than to bring out in the clearest possible manner the prevalent fatal misconception in regard to the origin or source of evil. We have seen that evil is popularly conceived to be of an actual rather than a spiritual genesis, that it is supposed, in other words, to be identical with actual transgression. And whoso shall examine the theological scheme here cited, will perceive that the various sects accept the popular philosophy of the subject, and this in the face of the plainest scriptural information to the contrary. This scheme makes evil to have consisted primarily in the violation on man's part of some positive law of God, such as "thou shalt not eat of the fruit of a certain tree:" so that if we suppose no such positive law ever to have been given, evil could never have occurred, inasmuch as where

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there is no law there can be no transgression. Thus on this hypothesis we find man subjected to death, not by the normal and dynamic operation of his own nature, not by the inseparable and irresistible gravitation of his own selfhood, but by virtue purely of an outward *casus* or contingency; that is to say, by virtue of the contingency of a temptation sufficient to induce him to violate a purely arbitrary external mandate, which he was at the same time constitutionally free to violate under those circumstances. Given this temptation in sufficient strength, the man was bound to succumb, provided he was endowed with moral freedom, for moral freedom means neither more nor less than the ability to incline one's self in the direction of whatsoever seems *to one's self* good. And thus the Divine law, instead of being a mere witness of the death man incloses in himself, instead of being simply a means of making the universal prevalence of spiritual death *known*, is actually made the occasion of the *existence* of that death, or to use the strong language of the apostle, is actually "made death" to man.

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The apostle invariably represents the law as designed only to give *the knowledge* of sin, and not by any means to give it existence. He declares that spiritual death entered the world only in consequence of sin, and that this death reigned over all men inasmuch as all had sinned, even those who had not, like Adam their first father, committed any actual transgression. But he says further, that sin is not *imputed* when there is no law, since of course man must in that case be wholly unconscious of the meaning of the word. The law came in therefore only that sin, which was before unknown, might appear sin to the sinner, and that he might thus be led in all humility to seek help from God. He seemed to himself alive once without the law, although he was really all the while full of death: but when the law came to illuminate his true spiritual condition, sin lived and he died. Thus the law, which was holy, just, and good, did not inflict death upon him, it served only as a means of giving him a knowledge of the death *which already existed in him* by virtue of his intrinsic evil, but of which

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he had been hitherto unconscious. Such is the undeniable purport of Paul's argument.

But the theologic scheme we have cited plainly ignores all this apostolic reasoning, perverting it to the support of the atrocious figment of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. Our orthodox theologians perceive plainly enough that the apostle affirms the existence of sin, and the consequent prevalence of death, previous to any actual transgression. But they are utterly at a loss to make any rational use of this affirmation, because, unlike the apostle, they cannot believe in sin as a spiritual and unconscious state, but only as an actual and conscious one. But being absolutely obliged to make some use of it, they clutch at the accidental mention of Adam's name by Paul, in a representative sense, or as opposed to the second Adam, and represent the sin attributed by the apostle to those who have committed no actual transgression, as being in fact only Adam's sin *imputed* to them, or *credited* to them, by God, though in strict justice they were entirely innocent of it. That is to say,

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God "makes believe," as the children say, that these really innocent people are sinners, on the ground of their father having sinned. And if you say, "But is not this very cruel and unjust on the part of God?" they reply, "O no, it is in order to a great mercy; for God is going again to 'make believe' when Christ comes full of righteousness, that this righteousness of Christ belongs to the very people whom he before credited with Adam's sin." But if you ask, "What then? what are these poor shuttlecocks going finally to gain by all this making-believe? Are they all going to be taken to heaven to enjoy angelic delights to eternity?"—you will get a ludicrously shrunken answer to your interrogatory. You will be told, "Nay, only the first imputation, the imputation of Adams's sin, remains universally operative: the second imputation, the imputation of Christ's righteousness, becomes operative only upon those who acquire also an *actual* righteousness, the righteousness of faith." If you ask, what then can possibly be the use of "imputing" Christ's righteousness to people, seeing that

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they are never benefited by it, seeing that their own actual righteousness is necessary, like castor oil after calomel, to give it efficacy, you will probably get no answer for your pains. You will probably be called an "infidel," which I devoutly trust you may remain to all eternity so far as such abject theological cobbling as this is concerned.

The sole remedy against all this ecclesiastical corruption, is, an honest return to Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine teaches that God is not the author of death, but only of life; that death is a consequence of sin on the part of the creature, and in the nature of things cannot be an infliction, because it is a purely subjective phenomenon. It is the state of a man in love with himself more than with God and his neighbor; and as love cannot be inflicted upon one, nor even imposed, by the will of another, it is idle to look upon death as having any origin external to the subject. The scholastic theology as we have seen, implicates God himself in the origination of sin, by making His law a *conditio sine qua non* of its ex-

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istence : and it imperfectly extricates poor unfortunate man from the death thus clumsily entailed upon him, only by a device still more clumsy, that is, by the imposition of totally unjust and inconceivable sufferings upon a perfectly innocent substitute. Your own book may not literally prove the *last* gasp of that theology, but clearly, gasping is the only function that remains to it, until it is decently and tenderly interred out of human remembrance on the shelves of disused libraries. Meanwhile the duty is imperative on all of us to return to the apostolic gospel, and to the entirely rational doctrine of evil which is involved in it, a doctrine which perfectly exculpates the Creator from any complicity with it, by proving it to be a purely subjective experience of the creature *in alienation* from God.

The apostolic doctrine has this explicit extent, no more. It is limited to asserting and proving the essential discrepancy which exists between Moralism or Legalism, considered as a basis of intercourse with God, and Christianity, inasmuch as the one was necessarily fruitful

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only of death, the other of life. But implicitly the apostolic reasoning involves a vital philosophy. For its explicit contents proceed upon the tacit assumption, that Moralism, or the pretension of man to selfhood in the way that selfhood is ordinarily conceived, namely as absolute, as implying, for example, a power in man to originate his own good and evil, is philosophically absurd and fallacious. The apostle denied that the law furnished the original bond of intercourse between God and the soul, and affirmed on the contrary, that it entered only when the soul had lapsed from its pristine estate, to attest the fact of such lapse, and stimulate a grateful hope of the Divine mercy.

Of course then the fall of man, though inevitably entailing the most disastrous subjective consequences, must be logically viewed as having awakened no properly vindictive emotions on the part of God, since we cannot conceive of a perfect being showing mercy to those who have justly offended Him. This conclusion is irresistible, if you allow the apostolic premises. If the apostolic allegation be true, that man

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had no sooner lapsed from his primitive innocence, than God instituted a beneficent system of instrumentalities to keep alive a remembrance of the event, until such time as He might Himself descend to the level of the created consciousness, and win back all, and more than all, the ground which was lost: then it follows of strict logical necessity that the creature could not have been previously standing in a *probationary* attitude towards the Creator: it follows, in short, that the sole possible previous relation between them was that of unlimited mercy on the one side, and of unlimited dependence on the other. And this relation, view it in either aspect, nips Moralism in the bud, or proves that the sentiment of responsibility in the creature legitimately attests only a fallen and sinful condition.

Such I religiously believe to be the scientific truth of the case. No man ever was born, nor ever will be born, capable of *originating* a good affection or an evil affection, capable of originating a good thought or an evil thought: simply because no man was ever born, nor ever

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will be born to an independent existence or selfhood. It is impossible even for the Divine power to create such an existence, because such an existence would be tantamount to the Divine, and God is uncreated. Every good affection and good thought consequently which man experiences, must be an inflow of God through heaven: every evil affection and evil thought must be an inflow from hell. Hence no error is so deadly as that which consists in "eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," or what is the same thing, in appropriating the good and the evil which we do. It is the identical error, it is true, which brought God down to man, but He came down to us only that He might the more surely lift us up to dwell eternally with Him. And this cannot be if we obstinately cling to the death in which He found us, and decline the emancipation He has accomplished for us. That death inhered EXCLUSIVELY in our fallacious estimate of ourselves. Misled by our senses, we regard ourselves as possessing an absolute selfhood, or one which originates its own good and evil; and

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hence we render ourselves liable to an incessant inflation from the pride of moral goodness, or to an incessant depression from the mortification of moral evil. This is a most real state of death, viewed either under its aspect of inflation, or that of collapse : it is a state of incessant toil and sorrow in ourselves, and of anxiety and perturbation towards God. For we have made our own selves the centre and source of life to us, banishing God, who is its true source and centre, to the remote circumference of our being : and so transcendent a power as God cannot take an outside and circumferential position towards a power so derivative and feeble as the finite selfhood, without appearing to be antagonistic, and stimulating the incessant dread of invasion. Thus we become abandoned to spiritual unsteadiness and unrest. We have become sufficient to ourselves, or independent of God, and we cannot feel this sentiment of self-sufficiency, and consequent independence, without instantly distrusting God. And distrust begets every odious and disgusting form of adulation or servility. Witness the abominations

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of Heathen worship. Witness the superstitions of Romanism, and the deplorable follies of ascetic piety all the world over. All these things proceed upon the nauseous and servile adulation of the Deity, or upon the deliberate attempt to *placate* Him, and *convert Him from an inimical to a friendly power.* And such practices and attempts could never have originated unless man had previously fallen in love with himself, or got to feeling himself independent of God. No one could dream of God being hostile to him, unless he first felt himself remote from God, or properly independent of Him. And it is this sentiment of independence accordingly which is the fruitful mother of superstition, because it is first the principle and source of spiritual death in man.

To pass, then, from death to life means, when spiritually viewed, to cease from self-reliance and confide in God. Hence we may see a reason why, typically, the Jewish ritual exhibited such an extreme jealousy on the part of God against idolatry. The spiritual truth being that man's life is wholly in God, the

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typical representation of it must make idolatry, or the worship of false gods, a sin of the first magnitude, being an absolute destruction to the worshipper. And hence, further, we may see that if we persist to identify ourselves with our finite constitution, we shall miss the spiritual and divine ends to which that constitution is properly subordinate. The Divine Mercy is doubtless supreme over all the fields of being, but it operates only by the laws of goodness and truth, which are spiritual laws; and if, therefore, we obdurately disclaim the allegiance of these laws, we put ourselves out of harmony with it. If, for example, we go into the spiritual world, not only unemancipated from the natural selfhood, but actually and from choice confirmed in our love and devotion to it, we can never expect to receive Divine good, or see Divine truth save in an *inverted* way. That is to say, we can expect to realize our own proper peace, our own individual rest, not as the angels realize it by the immediate inflow of God's Spirit into their interiors, but only as the consequence of a gradual reduction of Nature itself

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to scientific order and adjustment, by the operation of the Divine Natural Humanity.

I do not see, my dear sir, that any just philosophic demur may lie against this exhibition of Christian doctrine. All cultivated human *instincts* indeed concur, when closely scrutinized, in denying to man any power of originating his own good and evil. We never accredit a person with the good or the evil which exists in him simply as thought or desire, but only with that which he *actively* appropriates. It is requisite that he make it his by *enacting* it, before we consent to ascribe it to him. In the same manner all human discipline aims to divorce us from the magnification of the natural and moral selfhood, or the identification of our interests with our merely finite and constitutional endowments. This is very obviously true in respect to the negative or *evil* side of those endowments. Thus we teach every child alike to aim by diligent activity at the conquest of physical want and impotence. And we teach every child alike not to lie, not to steal, not to murder, not to commit adul-

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tery. But the law is quite as active in respect to the positive or *good* side of our constitutional endowments. Thus we feel an instinctive disgust when we see a person proud of his material wealth, or his physical vigor and beauty, and a disgust amounting to reprobation when we see him indulging a conceit of his moral goodness. This is Pharisaism, or the most subtle form of anti-christian error, consisting—oftentimes under a profession of devout zeal for the truth and great ritual scrupulosity—in cherishing a spirit of separation from one's kind, or placing one's Godward hope in one's being better than certain other men.

Now, obviously the ground of all this teaching on the one hand, and of all this disgust and reprobation on the other, is, that we feel by an intellectual instinct, that good and evil are purely constitutional facts with man, or facts which inhere in his physical and rational constitution, and do not attach to that spiritual and regenerate nature which comes from God in him. I see without terror in my child, the dawn of evils which may yet overshadow the

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heaven of his inward innocence, and bedew the earth of his outer life with tears, bitter tears: because the dear child is all the while Divinely poised above this evil, and can never be hurt by the suffering it causes him. It has power *to bruise his heel*, or to afflict him outwardly, but he is continually and Divinely empowered to *trample upon its head*, that is, to exclude its spirit from his own bosom. The only possible damage we sustain from evil, is not the suffering it causes us, but the bosom-pleasure it affords. Suffering is invariably sanatory, and ends in peace. Pleasure is often debilitating, and ends in sorrow. I am persuaded that no man ever suffered an hour in God's universe, without reaping, if he were a good man, a quite endless internal profit from the occurrence, or if he were a bad man, a quite endless external profit: such is my conviction of the infinitude or perfection of the Divine Mercy. Evil hurts us, in a word, only by our own consent, only in so far as we love it, and make it our own. Thus, suppose me to be a covetous man, or an adulterer; suppose that I heartily covet the

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pleasures of accumulation, or of illicit love, and that I am left free to pursue my taste without any social impediment, that is, without reaping any outward punishment for the incidental injustice or injury done to others. It is easy to see that my internal or spiritual condition becomes intensely loathsome at once, as reflecting the unmixed operation of self-love. For this love, having all hell to back it, will coerce me into a bondage which must soon suck up all my lesser affections, and wither all my varied faculties by sheer disuse. Thus the grand evil of such a condition is, that the subject is interiorly severed from God, never to know the aching amplitude of bliss which flows from conjunction with Him. It would be an unspeakably odious lot, exhibited outwardly, no doubt. For you can easily imagine how loathsome a figure must result, when the miser's greed or the adulterer's leer has become *fixed* on the character, and shapes or controls its expression. But who but an angel can, even faintly, estimate the *negative* wretchedness of a lot eternally divorced from the Divine love?

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I do not dread then the access of evil in my child, considered as a source of outward suffering to him, but only as a source of inward pleasure. And on this ground I hope he may get as much of the outward suffering it involves, as may serve to balance and destroy any inward pleasure it brings. In other words, I do not dread my child's constitutional subjection to evil, simply because it is a purely *constitutional* subjection, and by no means therefore spiritually characteristic. My child, like myself, has no absolute being, no being in himself, and is consequently dependent for his existence upon certain conditions; that is to say, he must be the neutral or third term of two opposing terms. This opposition gives him a basis of existence, gives him constitution or self-consciousness, which, from the nature of things, must have otherwise been for ever lacking to him. Now it seems to me of very trivial consequence what strength of mere *natural* constitution my child has in either a positive or negative direction, that is, in the direction either of good or evil. The heavenly element, or the

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infernal element, may either of them appear to dominate his *natural* temperament or constitution, and I shall remain equally without alarm. Because I shall diligently remind myself that this natural constitution of his, whether markedly good or evil, is but the basis of an ulterior spiritual development, which alone will be Divinely characteristic of the lad, and to which therefore all my love and tenderness are eternally due.

I shall endeavor, therefore, if I find the celestial element preponderating in his nature, that is, if I find him naturally good, gentle, patient, sweet, to keep him from too zealous an appropriation of these things, that is, from any pride of possessing them. I will say to him what is sheer truth; "Yes, these are very sweet traits, my child, and they make you sweet and beautiful to your father's heart; but we must both remember that all these things come from God to us through the medium of angels, and are not intended therefore to make us proud or vain. They are intended only to form a plane or basis of self-consciousness for us, on

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which we may afterwards go forth to an individual spiritual conjunction with God. If, therefore, you grow conceited of these natural possessions, if you appropriate to yourself, in other words, what belongs to God, and what is simply lent to you for higher uses, you neglect these uses, and fail to realize your eternal conjunction with God." And if I find the infernal element preponderating in appearance, if I find the child exhibiting a deceitful, ungenerous, and revengeful temper, I shall take occasion, when disciplining him, to instruct him at the same time not to grow discouraged, for that these dispositions are exclusively an influx from evil spirits, and do not belong to him, save in so far as he heartily cherishes and indulges them. I shall tell him, what is sheer truth, that these things are allowed to influence him, only that he may freely avert himself from them when he perceives them to be opposed to God or goodness, and so come into everlasting spiritual conjunction with God. And that if he goes on accordingly to do evil, he must ally himself in spirit with evil men to all eternity,

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and find himself cut off from any interior divine delight such as the angels enjoy.

I cannot too often repeat then, that both good and evil, moral good and moral evil, are purely *constitutional* facts with man, and are designed to be purely subordinate or ministerial to that spiritual and regenerate life which is the true gift of God. We despise the fop, or the natural Pharisee, who highly prizes his physical superiorities to other people; and we abhor the Pharisee, or the spiritual fop, who highly prizes his moral superiorities to other people: because we instinctively feel that they are equally under a fatal misconception of the true life, the life which is in all Divine goodness alone. No doubt one man *is* vastly superior in physical respects to another, and that other probably vastly superior in moral respects to a third: but if this superiority furnish an appreciable increment of life to the subject, especially if, as in the latter case it too often does, it constitute in any considerable degree the basis of his confidence in God, and the argument of his devotion: it seems hardly necessary to say that the

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person is *so far* unacquainted with the Spirit of God, and incapable of heavenly delights. All men alike are utterly dependent upon God for life, and in the very nature of things, consequently, no man can be handsomer or better than his neighbor in the Divine sight. In the Divine sight every man alike is intrinsically nothing or vanity: and what he is extrinsically, or by the Divine indwelling exclusively, that the Lord must very clearly see reflects no credit upon the man himself.

In this state of things the orthodox mental strut we so often assume, and the attempt we make to parade our little finite superiorities, moral or ecclesiastical, before the infinite Goodness, would be very ludicrous if they were not so unspeakably sad. It is eternally true, of course, that God is infinitely averse to the deeds of the evil man. He is infinitely averse to all murder, treachery, and guile. But who upon earth ever doubted this truth? Would it not be slightly more relevant to human need, if we were to preach—what so many of us doubt, nay utterly disbelieve, namely—that He is

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quite equally averse to the pride which makes it *meritorious* to abstain from these things? He indeed forbids us to rob, or murder, or deceive our neighbor in any way; but this is not as so many suppose, in order that we may become differenced from other people or from our former selves, but only in order that by refraining from these things, and so denying the interior influence of evil, we may open our hearts to the access of pity, gentleness, mercy and peace from Him. He hates evil to be sure, but the positive aspect of that sentiment is, that He loves to communicate His own good to us. He would have me abstain from evil, not for the purpose of winning any puerile rewards from him in the shape of sensuous celestial joys, but purely because by such abstinence I repel the inflow of infernal dispositions from my interiors, and by such repulsion invite and attract those sweeter and angelic dispositions which alone constitute the heart's delight to eternity.

If, therefore, the morally good man give himself airs towards God, on the ground of his

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superiority to the morally evil man: if like the devout Pharisee in the Lord's parable, he cordially thank God that he is different from his evil neighbor, *and place his Godward hope in that difference:* his thanks are an offence to God, and his condition one of extreme danger. For the purpose of the Divine law is not to pronounce one man better in himself than another, but to make every man feel that however much he may differ in moral or personal regards from his neighbor, he is still in a spiritual view, or in the Divine sight, the same mass of corruption; and so lead every one alike to a cordial and exclusive reliance upon the Divine Mercy. The true creature of God consequently is not the morally good, or the morally evil man, but invariably a new or regenerate man who is full of humility, as feeling that the differences between himself and his brother, however great they may be in a social estimation, reflect no credit upon himself spiritually, because they are constitutional or grow out of his inherited nature; and who is therefore interiorly open to the fullest Divine influx.

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But I must be drawing to a close. Let me get back therefore to the fundamental idea of my Letter, to see if I can make it still more plain to you by new illustrations.

We have seen that no more mystery attaches to physical or moral evil, than to physical or moral good. For the antagonism of these opposites is indispensable, as we have also seen, to give man definition or consciousness in either sphere, because he has no absolute but only a relative and finite existence. If his being were underived and absolute, then of course this antagonism would not be necessary to the development of his consciousness; but as it is, consciousness would be utterly impossible without it. Destroy the equal constitutional subjection he is under to pleasure and pain, or plenty and want, and you destroy his animality, reducing him to mere vegetation. Make him the subject of pleasure alone or pain alone, and he becomes instantly passive, falling a ready prey to death. Or destroy the equal subjection he is constitutionally under to good and evil, or brotherly love and self-love, and you instantly

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destroy his moral consciousness, reducing him to mere animality. Make him the subject of brotherly-love alone, or self-love alone, and his manhood becomes merged immediately in the purely natural innocence of the dove, or the purely natural subtlety of the serpent. Accordingly the attempt to simplify the human constitution by making man subject in the social sphere to the influence of good alone, would be to the last degree destructive of his rational character, and end by relegating him to the ranks of mere animality.

Thus moral good and evil equally with physical good and evil, are necessary incidents of man's finite constitution, and their ample justification is to be found not in themselves, but in the superb human uses they alike promote. The antagonism of pleasure and pain in the physical sphere is necessary to disengage man's *will*, or elevate his life out of the sphere of mere vegetative instinct. And the antagonism of good and evil in the social sphere, is requisite to emancipate his *reason*, or elevate his life again out of the sphere of mere animal will.

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For the true or highest sphere of life is neither physical or nature-ward, nor social or manward, but spiritual and Godward; and our animal and moral life, or the life which we derive from nature and society respectively, is of value only as subserving the development of this. Here accordingly lies the eternal justification of physical and moral evil, as of physical and moral good; that they are *constituent* facts of the finite consciousness, or of that consciousness in man which is requisite to his subsequent experience of the Divine life.

And this statement appeases every demand of philosophy and science in the premises. The final cause of a phenomenon is the use it promotes to something above itself, and Philosophy, which is the quest of final causes, is bound to be satisfied, when you prove physical pain and moral evil to be perfectly vivified by use. Nor has Experience the slightest cavil to allege. For we all know very well that our sense of responsibility in any sphere never dates from the interests of that sphere, but is always enforced mainly by considerations derived from a supe-

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rior one. Thus I feel no physical responsibility, no responsibility to my own body, for any constitutional proneness I possess to disease. I feel myself morally responsible, responsible to society or my fellow-man, and it is chiefly from the desire to render myself well-pleasing in his sight that I strive to free myself from it. Take away the moral sentiment, the sentiment inspired by human society or fellowship, and I presume a man would remain completely passive under any amount of physical obstruction or evil. I *instinctively* feel that it would be extremely odious in me morally, if I were to accept such an inheritance without an effort of resistance. And society justifies the instinct by pronouncing me in that case morally imbecile, or insane with respect to all social ends, and by promptly consigning me to the hospital provided for such delinquency.

Nor do I hold myself morally responsible, or responsible to society chiefly, for any constitutional proclivity I possess to vice or moral disease. I feel myself *spiritually* responsible, or responsible to God, and it is in the interests of

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that responsibility mainly that I seek to be delivered from it. If I sought to be delivered from moral evil only with a view to moral ends, or to the acquisition of a good name, I should end by merely covering my evils over instead of eradicating them : in which case of course God must pronounce me spiritually imbecile, or insane with respect to all divine and eternal ends, and consign me, no doubt, to some hospital or penitentiary appropriate to that stupidity.

Let us not omit to notice in this connection how this sentiment of responsibility, corrupt and fallacious in itself, becomes Divinely overruled to good, and made subservient to our elevation out of low into higher conditions. For example, I am tempted to commit murder, theft, or adultery. Here are three outward and physical acts, which I, as a physical subject, am tempted to commit, but which I at the same time feel bound to abstain from. Now I may abstain on two grounds : first, on moral or social grounds merely, or as perceiving them to be *evil ;* and second, on spiritual grounds, or as perceiving them to be both evil and *sinful.* But

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in both cases alike, my experience amounts to the germination of a new and superior life in me. For in the first case, or when my abstinence is purely moral, being moved by a regard to my own good name or the interests of my social standing, that motive itself is elevating. It lifts me out of the purely animal life to which I am born subject, and introduces me into the higher life of society. What is purely animal and natural in me, becomes thus softened and refined into at least an *outward* form of humanity. I become winnowed or defecated in this way of my purely natural endowments, or lay aside as controlling motives of my action, the ferocity of the tiger, the cunning of the serpent, the meekness of the dove, the innocence of the lamb, or whatever merely natural dispositions characterize me, and aspire to act with freedom and rationality, aspire in short to put on the characteristics of man. And so also in the second case, or when my abstinence is spiritual as well as moral, being moved chiefly by a sentiment of reverence towards God, or a fear of offending Him, the result is even more

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striking. For the operation of *this* motive lifts me above the moral sphere as well as the physical, and associates me with angels as well as men. What I feel as a sense of responsibility to God, and a fear of offending Him, is only the outward and superficial and gross form of an infinitely profound, sweet, and tender inward fact, which is that I am invisibly to mortal sight, but most visibly to Divine, becoming more and more intimately blent with, or inserted among, angelic natures, and more and more fully qualified to know and adore the life which is God.

I repeat that there would never have been any obscurity on this whole subject, if there had not prevailed in the church a very fallacious sentiment in regard to the attitude of God towards merely moral righteousness. The church has always misconceived the death denounced in Eden upon man's moral or finite righteousness, and represented it as an arbitrary divine infliction, consequent upon some outward breach of obedience, the breach of an outward or positive command. It is very evident to a

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studious consideration, that the force of the scriptural narrative is preëminently spiritual, and that the entire Adamic history is to be regarded, not as so much purely superficial biographic detail concerning an eminent man and his wife, but as a type of the profoundest and most universal human truth. This is the way the apostles viewed the matter. The death incurred in Adam, is no inflicted death to their eye: it is simply the death which is *inherent* in the finite *selfhood* of man, whether the man be morally good or morally evil. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest *freely* eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, because in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." The tree is there, only it is not to be *eaten* of. That is to say, the knowledge of good and evil, or our moral consciousness, is very good as a basis for our spiritual evolution; but if we seek to *live* by this knowledge or consciousness, we utterly mistake the source of life, and reap death instead. It is the oppugnancy and eventual equilibrium of good and evil, which furnish us

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spiritual personality, or a platform for eternal conjunction with God: the moral or social sphere, consequently *in subordination to the spiritual*, is of infinite importance, but if it be viewed apart from such subordination, and exalted into the supreme end of the Divine Providence, it is the most fatal of mistakes. And this has been the mistake of mankind from Adam down to Jesus Christ. Men have looked upon moral good—or the good which exists by the contrast of evil, and is therefore finite or imperfect—as good *in se*, and consequently they have always supposed that God cherishes a feeling of personal friendship towards the morally good man, and a feeling of personal enmity towards the morally evil man. Hence the ensanguined conflict which Christ endured with the morally righteous of his day, and hence the utter incredulity which his truth now encounters, when it declares that "the things which are most highly esteemed among men, are abomination in the Divine sight." It seems so hard to believe that a man who unites the cordial suffrages of the community in his favor,

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should fail of God's personal applause; or that one who unites those suffrages in his condemnation, should fail of God's personal detestation!

Now this reputed diversity of aspect on the part of God towards his own dependent creatures, is a fact so awful and portentous, as naturally to quicken the sympathy of the benevolent for the morally evil, and set them upon diligently excogitating some metaphysical relief for that forlorn condition. In this way the true question concerning the origin of evil, and the nature of human responsibility, has become seriously compromised, having degenerated into a puerile controversy as to the actual existence of hell. To the truly philosophic mind, it is just as abhorrent logically that any thing a creature can do should merit or move his Creator's personal approbation, as it is that any thing he can do should merit or move his Creator's personal indignation. For the creature has neither being nor power underived from the Creator, and hence to suppose the Creator more favorably affected to one

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than to another of His creatures, is to suppose Him acting irrationally. But to the vulgar and untaught apprehension, there is nothing unreasonable in either possibility: on the contrary, the vulgar understanding utterly ignores the spiritual nature of man, and supposes that the only ground of acceptance with God, is the exhibition on the part of the subject of a superior personal merit to other men.

In this way, the Scriptures have become gradually emptied of their entire spiritual significance, and the popular imagination, consequently, has grown preternaturally acute to the unfortunate predicament of the morally evil. Thus Burns, though a man of sturdy poetic sinews, was so scant and arid a theologian as to compassionate the Devil, under a maudlin conviction that he was the victim of personal revenge and ill-usage at the hands of Deity. We find the same benevolent afflatus under much of the sentimental theology of the day. The sect of Universalists, and much of the current Unitarian inspiration, proceed solely upon the denial of personal malignity to God.

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Take from God his imputed malignity of feeling towards a portion of his creatures, and you take away the only apology they have for existing. Place the evil man and the good man on an equal footing before God, *as to personal desert:* that is to say, prove that the good of the one, though it properly exalt him to heaven, yet implies no personal *merit* on his part over other men; and that the evil of the other, though it properly degrade him to hell, yet implies no personal *demerit* on his part below other men: and you instantly reduce the Universalist, and in great part also the Unitarian, to logical silence. For their function is purely medicinal or objurgatory, and consequently when the offence which quickens them is removed, they logically confess themselves *functi officiis.*

The grand mystery, then, which the church needs to see unravelled is not the existence of either physical or moral evil, or that which grows out of our relations to nature and society, but the existence of spiritual evil, or that which grows out of our relations to God. Physical and moral evil attach to a man's physical

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and social constitution, and though he may never, therefore, shake it off as a possibility at least, its actual developments may yet be greatly modified by the advances of physical and social science. But spiritual evil attaches to the very selfhood of man, the morally good as well as the morally evil man, and no possible renovation, therefore, in the scientific sphere can ever avail to remedy it. The only remedy it admits is REGENERATION, or the spiritual new-birth of the subject. One's physical and moral evils constitutionally produce poignant suffering, and the time must infallibly come, therefore, either in this world or the next, when, if we do not correct them from a higher ground, we shall be forced to do so. But spiritual evil has its seat in the very selfhood of man, affecting his relations—not to his own body or his fellow-man chiefly—but to God, and hence the only possible chance of modifying it comes from an advance in true Divine knowledge.

What is meant by spiritual evil? It means in popular language *alienation of heart from*

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God, and this alienation is quite as likely to attach to the morally good man as to the morally evil, as likely to characterize the Pharisee as it is the publican and harlot. The New Haven theologians, whose vision never transcends the moral sphere, and who, by that fact, are bound to an eventual tacit subsidence into Unitarianism, take much pains to prove that all sin consists in voluntary action, and insist upon converting men to God by an improved scholastic method. But the soul, when truly touched with the Divine Goodness, laughs this poor pedantry to scorn, for it feels itself evil *in se* and prior to all action. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Such is the confession of every regenerate or instructed soul.

Stated less popularly, or more scientifically, spiritual evil consists in our feeling, and hence believing, that life is in ourselves; thus encouraging the unlimited growth of self-love. When I love my wife, my child, my friend; when I aspire to fulfil this, that, or the other function; when I make an intellectual discrim-

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ination of the true from the false; when I eat or drink, rise up or sit down, go out or come in; I feel a certain freedom or power, which really results altogether from the exact equilibrium in which I am upheld, but which seems to date from myself, or to argue in me an independent and absolute selfhood. My sensation is that my freedom or power of action is absolute and underived, and, *guided by this sensation*, I conclude that I have an independent selfhood, that is to say, a power of life and action apart from God. I am willing and perhaps eager to admit that this selfhood was created by God originally, or in the first place; but it now appears to exist absolutely and by its own momentum, so that I do not hesitate habitually to charge it with all the good and the evil which appear to proceed from it. So completely do I live by the persuasion of this selfhood, so utterly to my own imagination is my life identified with it, that when you come to me declaring that all the good I do is an influence from God through heaven, and all the evil I do an influence from hell, you seem to

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be talking very transparent nonsense. For it sensuously seems to me that I live by this selfhood, or by the power of originating my own good and evil, and consequently when you deny it, you appear to me to be denying my very life.

In the garden of every man's intelligence there are two trees, one the tree of finite knowledge, the other the tree of life. His finite knowledge is what defines him, or gives him consciousness, but it does not give him life or being. His life or being comes exclusively from God, and hence he is forbidden to *eat* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that is, is forbidden to *live* by his finite endowments or to place his happiness in them, because if he does so he shall assuredly reap death instead of life. He may perfectly appreciate the virtues of the tree of finite knowledge; may feel its suitableness to food, its pleasantness to the eye, and the specious promise it puts forth to make man wise; but if he allows himself to be so far seduced by these appearances as to *eat* of it, or seek to live by it, he must certainly die. This death will seem to

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him life no doubt, but it will be only the more real on that account.

Or to drop allegory, and speak directly to the facts. Every man has a real and a *quasi* life. His real life is in God, his *quasi* life is in himself. This *quasi*, or seeming life, is of inestimable value as giving us projection or relief from our mere nature, and so fitting us for the communication of the Divine life. But if it renounce this intrinsic subordination, and set up for itself, or as a finality, it proves a curse instead of a blessing.

Now this *quasi* or seeming life in all of us, is identical with the sphere of our moral freedom, or proper self-consciousness. We find ourselves invested with the responsibility of our own actions, or free to do what seems to us good, and to avoid what seems to us evil. Nothing seems more real to us than this sentiment of freedom, nothing seems more vitally precious. My heart bounds, my lungs expand, my form dilates, I walk erect and Godlike under its genial but fallacious inspiration. It penetrates to the subtlest fibre of my being, and every

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where the breezes of health and vigor and immortal joy appear to go with it. So far good. For without this lift from the dead level of nature, I should be as incapable as the brute of conjunction with God, I should be as incapable as the brute of immortal life. So long, therefore, as feeling this freedom, or apparent life in myself, I yet do not place my happiness in it, but sedulously strive to realize by means of it the life which comes from God, I walk in innocence and am happy. I am naked, it is true, but still unashamed.

But we all know how naturally or inevitably the feeling of absolute selfhood supervenes upon this sentiment of freedom, or becomes ingrafted on it. The growth of the sensuous principle in us, or the progress of our dominion over nature, causes us to value our freedom *in se*, or for its own independent sake, and not merely for the sake of its ulterior celestial and spiritual ends. The life of nature becomes gradually more pronounced in us. Beneficent genii appear to wait upon all man's efforts to realize a bountiful life in outward things, and

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we accordingly conceive a distrust for the old traditions which pointed our hope, and postponed our best expectations, to the access of a superior life. Thus we begin to feel not merely freedom, but an absolute *selfhood* or property in nature. We look upon ourselves as very much greater than our forefathers thought: we grow conceited of our increasing power and wealth, eager after unlimited possessions, clamorous for our private rights, disputatious, covetous, revengeful, lovers of ourselves rather than lovers of God and the neighbor: in short, we rapidly learn to place ourselves at an immeasurable distance from the Tree of Life. This is the only and universal spiritual evil, the loving ourselves supremely and God subordinately; and its most pregnant symptom becomes immediately revealed in that conscience of shame, which makes us seek to decorate ourselves, or palliate our intrinsic but now unhappily no longer unabashed nakedness, by the fig leaves of a ritual righteousness. Pride is the only root of shame, and if accordingly we had not first become self-loving and self-living, we

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should never have blushed at that nakedness which is the genuine mark of our creaturely dependence, and which is properly full therefore of essential celestial innocence.

Now Philosophy, much more than Theology even, has done little else hitherto than inflame our sense of separation from God, by inflaming the pride of this *quasi* or seeming life. Indeed it may be said in passing, that Theology has never erred except when she has listened to the bland sophistry of her philosophic wooer. And we must make up our minds to acquit Philosophy, too, of any intentional deceit, for circumstances were too powerful for poor human wit to master them. The early traditions of the race being eclipsed, or hiding their pure spiritual splendors within the husks of literal and symbolic cosmogonies, man has in heart forgotten that all his life is in God, and holds the truth only as a fact of memory. How shall Philosophy then, *which*, if it be any thing short of Revelation, *comes from man*, illuminate his heart, and persuade him of the great truth? The first philosopher that ever lived—if we

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may be pardoned for a moment in confounding symbol with substance—he whose inspiration has quickened every subsequent school and system, declared that the tree of finite knowledge was the true tree of life for man, and that he must certainly become a God, or a centre to himself, provided he would only boldly venture the experiment. And this old philosopher has very fitly gone on his belly ever since, by way of signifying how prone and level to the base earth that strain of aspiration and tuition was.

But other philosophers and philosophies have arisen, which have been popularly exalted to heaven, without teaching any essentially better lesson. While we may say in brief of all philosophies, that their mission has been to aggrandize the moral element in man, or inflame the sentiment of selfhood, we perceive that the latest form of Philosophy which on the continent of Europe has devoured all preceding forms, and offers to sop up all theology, and all science into its arrogant maw, fairly confounds the moral or finite element in man with the infinite and eternal Goodness, or identifies the

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human *Ego* with uncreated Divinity. Philosophy has not the slightest suspicion that man is nought *in se* or by nature. If it had, it would of course have neither interest nor existence apart from Theology. It has not the slightest conception that his nature is strictly *not to be*, and that it is consequently only in so far as he gets divorce or deliverance from this nature, that he *is*. On the contrary, Philosophy, wooden-headed and stony-hearted, looks upon the phenomenal or *quasi* world, the world of appearances, as the true substantial world, yet potters dismally and finally runs off howling, when you ask her—what on that hypothesis ought to be the simplest of queries—wherein, for example, a man's identity consists? It takes the sentiment of freedom in man as somehow a matter of course, and is no more solicitous to justify it by its uses to a superior life, than it is to justify any mere fact of nature, say the existence of green peas, or strawberries. Yet the one fact is unspeakably awful, and the other totally insignificant.

This fact of morality or freedom is full of

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awe to the reflective mind, because it is a *super*-natural fact. No proper subject of nature has the slightest experience of it. Every proper subject of nature does instinctively or mechanically what his nature prompts. He is beneath his nature, so to speak; his nature comes between him and Deity, and quenches the beams of that too-ardent Mercy. But man is not the proper subject of his nature. He is the proper subject of God alone. He becomes the subject of his nature therefore improperly, or by his own act, by his own stupid and persistent choice, and in spite of the sharpest Providential reminders and rebukes. Thus I repeat that man is properly *super*-natural. He feels superior to his physical constitution, feels free to obey or disobey its laws and appointments at pleasure, and sometimes for the veriest trifle of provocation will madly renounce it altogether.

It is this sentiment of freedom or power in me, which reflectively strikes me as full of dread. Whence does it come? What right have I to it? Who or what is this *I* that I speak of so familiarly, that I love so tenderly,

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that I labor for so staunchly? There is but ONE being, the infinite God: who am I that I should seem also to be? Clearly I am not, save by Him, and if therefore I seek to live by myself, my life is turned to instant death. The horse that frolics in the meadow opposite, the bird that sails the azure air, and the fish that cleaves the depths of yon majestic ocean, know no death, because they know only the natural life, and are perfectly passive to all its behests. Bodily decay and death are normal facts of the life they enjoy, and you consequently find them as quietly passive to the final hour as to the natal. But I know a death which utterly corrupts the joy of this natural life, and turns its most brimming innocence to vice and crime, a spiritual death or a death-in-life, and this death grows out of the fact of supernatural life or freedom which I have been signalizing. I know this death only by virtue of possessing a life superior to that of nature; a life which shall outlast all worlds, were they as many as the sands of the sea for multitude, simply because it is a gift of the infinite and eternal God to

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me. This statement I believe conciliates every demand both of religion and science.

I think I have now fairly accomplished my task. I have fully stated, illustrated, and vindicated those laws of the Divine creation, which permit the existence of evil in the creature, without reflecting any disparagement of the Divine Perfection. What topics remain to be glanced at, therefore, will permit a somewhat desultory treatment.

Having shown so fully that the freedom which God gives man is not absolute, but wholly subordinate, on the contrary, to a superior spiritual end, which end is the eternal conjunction of the Creator and creature, it will not be required of me to linger at any length upon the evasion of the orthodox difficulty attempted by what is called the New-school Divinity. The orthodox difficulty grows, as we have abundantly seen, out of its naturalistic method. It regards creation as a physical act of God, and consequently makes all the intercourse of Creator and creature physical instead of spiritual, external instead of internal. Looking upon

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conscience as an original faculty of the soul, or as an expression of the normal relation between Creator and creature, it supposes that the fall was a purely moral phenomenon instead of a spiritual one, consisting in a breach of positive law on the part of man. Hence it takes all the affirmations of conscience as literally or absolutely true. It does not view them as shaped by, or taking color from, a vitiated spiritual state of man, and therefore as possessing only a partial truth, or a truth proportioned to his lapsed intelligence; but as reflecting the absolute and normal relation of God to the soul. It supposes that God is literally enraged at man on account of his disobedience, and that He really inflicts suffering upon him from a just desire to give him pain, and that man consequently must be immeasurably unhappy to all eternity, unless this sanguinary demand of Deity become previously appeased and surfeited in the blood of a superior victim.

Of course the human mind cannot always rest content under a programme of the Divine relations so revolting as this. The instinct of

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God's perfection which is more or less acute in all minds, forbids it. Accordingly in all ages of the church, intelligent and conservative minds have done their best to reconcile the affirmations of the natural conscience, that is, the theology which is erected upon those affirmations, with the Divine rectitude, or to use your phraseology, with the principles of honor and right. We have seen indeed that this task is wholly incapable of any satisfactory issue, save upon the gospel method, that method in which the apostle Paul was a proficient. The gospel effectually disposes of the entire question of human responsibility, first, by going behind conscience or the law, and proving it to be merely the sign and seal of a fallen spiritual condition in man: and secondly, by showing that the consequences of this fall have been completely overcome by the work of Christ, and the tie between Creator and creature restored to more than its original vigor and lustre. But the ecclesiastical perversion of the gospel, has of course always debarred inquirers from the help it would otherwise have gladly afforded

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them, and restricted them to the philosophically hopeless task of justifying human responsibility on absolute grounds, or irrespectively of the work of Christ. Human responsibility, or the moral sentiment in man, is utterly incapable of a philosophic justification apart from the atoning work of Christ. Viewed absolutely, or without reference to that work, it is, as we have seen, the hot-bed and fountain of sin. But by the union which Christ effected between the Divine and human natures, he for ever put away sin from the Divine remembrance, or brought the moral sentiment, the sentiment of responsibility, the sentiment of selfhood in man, into the eternal allegiance of God. But the very best minds of the church have been blind to this intrinsic and essential subordination of the moral sentiment, and have consequently spent their lives in the impracticable endeavor to justify it on absolute grounds. They have never dreamt of going behind conscience, as Paul did, and treating it as a purely ministerial force, essentially subservient to a transcendent and unimaginable mercy. They have always treated it,

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on the contrary, as an original instead of a delegated authority, as a principal instead of a lieutenant, as a finished education instead of a skilful propædeutics; and consequently, they have practically but most unintentionally kept up both in themselves and their followers, a heart of impenetrable ice towards God and man.

But let us, nevertheless, see how these gentlemen proceed in this perilous task of theirs. Obviously the only way of dealing with conscience or the moral sentiment absolutely and at first hand, or of justifying it, and so vindicating the Divine justice, is to make righteousness and sin strictly voluntary and actual. Because unless you do so, you make them a passive experience of man, and no sane man charges himself with what he suffers, but only with what he does. To justify conscience therefore specifically with regard to sin, it is necessary that you carefully take sin out of the physical category, and place it in the moral one; that you show it to be an infirmity, not of man's nature, but exclusively of his will; that you prove it in short an inability which is properly formu-

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lated, in every case, only by the expression *I will not* instead of *I cannot*. Thus the *New School Divinity* as it is called, which now represents the conservative tendency in theology, as opposed to the retrogressive and possibly infidel tendency which endorses the *Edwardsian* view of morality, proposes to make all sin voluntary or actual, and so vindicate God's rectitude, by exhibiting Him castigating the sinner purely for his own merit's sake, and not for that of his nature. The orthodox preachers had always represented man as punishable by reason of the imputation of Adam's sin to him: and it was found that the people in the pews, especially those who had been long soaked in this doctrine, slept very soundly, and were occasionally heard indeed to snore very loudly, to its dulcet lullaby. The new-school preachers disused this sedative music, and thereby frequently succeeded for long intervals in utterly banishing drowsiness from the walls of our ecclesiastical Zion. I remember to have heard the Rev. Mr. ——, who was perhaps the protagonist of the movement in these parts, discourse one

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night in the *Tabernacle*, and you would have thought had you been there, that we had got unmoored from Christendom since you were last at church, and drifted back again to old Judea, or even the unmitigated night of Paganism: so effectually was every star of hope and consolation in the tranquil Christian heavens, blotted out by the dense vapors going up from the unregenerate earth of mortal fear and unbelief.

One cheerfully applauds the New-School movement from its own point of view. The movement was strongly conservative of the church's best interests, considered as an ecclesiastical system merely, or with an eye strictly to its social bearings. This I cordially believe. I believe that every sincere outbirth of the ecclesiastical conscience in these latter ages is full of beneficent social influence, and will tell very powerfully in developing the true church of Christ on earth, which is a regenerate society: and I will gladly return to this point, as I have already promised, before I shall have done. But these gentlemen had no such restricted view of their own influence. They proposed to

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shed a clear light upon gospel truth, and to exhibit the principles upon which God's spiritual and eternal kingdom in the heavens proceeded. And here they blundered irrecoverably at the very threshold.

In the first place, so far from its being true that all sin is voluntary or actual, it is not true that any sin *viewed intimately or spiritually*, is of that nature. This superficial view of sin belongs only to those who have previously lost all spiritual apprehension of their relation to God, and it is exclusively with a design to recover or restore that apprehension, that the law or conscience is given by God. Thus our voluntary activity as measured against a faultless divine law, is no doubt requisite, during our spiritual debasement, to constitute a basis for the *intelligible imputation* of sin to us; but this activity so far from constituting that sin itself, is merely its superficial fruit and symptom. My moral evil, or the evil which I *do*, grows out of a deeper and spiritual evil which I *am*, but which I am unconscious of, until it is re-revealed to me by the light of conscience or the

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law. Thus the true theatre of sin lies back of our activity, and centres in our fundamental loves or affections. And the gospel accordingly stamps itself as a Divinely appointed remedy for sin, precisely by this fact, that it aims primarily to *renew our affections*, or wean us from the love of self, to the love of God and our neighbor.

One will cheerfully concede then to the New-School theologian, that there can be no individual or personal *imputation* of sin, which the individual person has not voluntarily and actually committed; but the existence of sin is a totally different thing from the imputation or consciousness of it. In fact, it is only the regenerate man or angel, as I have said before, who is ever conscious of it. The degenerate man, or devil, denies the imputation of it with all his heart, and seriously resolves its consciousness into an aggravated form of dyspepsia. Thus the personal imputation or appropriation of sin, as contingent upon law or conscience, is one thing, and belongs only to a portion of mankind. But the existence of sin, as contin-

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gent upon an alienation of heart from God, which descends to us from all our past ancestry, is a very different thing, and attaches to all mankind without exception. Sin lies in the principle of selfhood, the principle of independence in man, and it lies there as we have seen totally unsuspected, until conscience or the law comes to give it activity; and how does it act under this quickening? Why it drives us to conceal our true condition, or cover it up under the folds of natural good; it drives us to seek to placate God, and justify ourselves before Him, by heaping up all manner of ritual righteousness, and so differencing ourselves from other men. It acts, in short, only by freely bringing forth the fruits of death, only by perfectly developing to our own gaze, happily, but at all events to the gaze of others, the utterly selfish state of our affections, and our consequent total remoteness from the Spirit of God. This is both the evangelic and the only philosophic view of sin; and this view is entirely superseded by the New-School teaching.

It is notorious, moreover, in the second

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place, that we gain nothing in the way of vindicating Divine justice by making sin voluntary, unless we at the same time postulate the autonomic or self-determining power of the will: which is a large philosophic imbecility, with a logical flavor of Atheism. But let us admit for a moment that the postulate is philosophically just. It immediately becomes clear that what we thus seem to gain in one way, is infallibly lost in another. For if we make all sin voluntary, and at the same time make the will autonomic, not merely apparently, but really or absolutely so, we most surely destroy the truth of the Christian redemption. The redemption which Christ wrought was possible only because man's motive force is wholly derived to him from spiritual association, or heaven and hell. Accordingly by reducing heaven and hell to order, or a just equilibrium, He has eternally vindicated man's spiritual freedom, and so restored him to more than his unfallen *status*, or to a conjunction with God which is at once perfect and indestructible.

Scripturally viewed, redemption is what

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alone makes salvation possible. It is always represented by the apostles as a necessary Divine preliminary to salvation. We must first *be delivered out of the hands of our enemies :* that is, be redeemed ; *in order that we may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life :* that is, before we can be saved. Salvation is a subjective work, which takes place only by our own consent, and consists in our putting away evils as sins against God, or from a sentiment of their contrariety to infinite Goodness. Redemption is an objective work, or an exclusively Divine proceeding which took place centuries before we were born, and which consisted in so complete a subjugation of evil or hell on the part of Christ, as will eternally prevent it interfering again with human freedom, or separating between man and God. Redemption is accordingly quite independent for its truth both upon our knowledge and belief. Its truth would be totally unaffected, even though no one should subsequently have been saved. For it means nothing more nor

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less than the deliverance of man from the overpowering dominion of his nature, or the tyranny of evil, to which he was fast becoming an utter victim, and his consequent restoration to spiritual conjunction with God, or the unlimited freedom to ally himself with perfect Goodness and Wisdom, in the most intimate manner his aspirations prompt.

Salvation is our personal realization of this spiritual freedom. It is the grateful acquiescence of the individual soul in this great fact of redemption, and its consequent hearty delight and endeavor to purify itself from the lusts of evil. In the nature of things salvation cannot be compulsory or morally obligatory. It is only spiritually obligatory, or obligatory on those who wish it. The great truth of Redemption guarantees this. For redemption implies, not the extinction of hell, but its thorough subjugation to human use, or the Divine Natural Humanity. In other words, the redemption of man from the dominion of Evil, by the assumption of human nature on the part of God, and the consequent subjugation of the hells, does

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not imply his subsequent abandonment, or enforced subjection to the dominion of good. It implies neither more nor less than that he shall be spiritually his own master to all eternity, without the slightest *undue* or *predominating* influence on the part of either angel or devil. If it had been otherwise, if the Divine Love had redeemed us from the tyranny of hell, only to hand us over to the tyranny of heaven, our true human condition in the long run would have been wholly unimproved, or improved only in a sentimental regard. In both cases alike, we should have lost every vestige of our distinctive humanity, the only difference being that, in case of our subjection to the unrestrained dominion of heaven, we should have declined into the likeness of tame and useful animals, like the sheep, the dove, the cow, the horse; and in the case of subjection to the unrestrained dominion of hell, into the likeness of fierce and noxious animals, such as the fox and the tiger, the vulture and the snake. Of course sentimentally speaking, I would rather be a sheep than a tiger, a dove than a vulture: but

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when the loss of my manhood is regarded as the price I am to pay for that advantage, the difference I confess seems to me abundantly trivial. Well, it is precisely this manhood of ours, this spiritual freedom from the dominion either of heaven or hell, which Christ eternally secured by redeeming us from death, and reuniting us with God. But this redemption would have been completely impossible on Christ's part, had all sin been voluntary. For sin being voluntary, one of two things ensues: either first, that man is not under the constraining power of sin, and therefore requires no deliverance from it; in which case you exhaust the *historic* truth of Christ's work: or secondly, that being under its constraining power, yet inasmuch as that power dates from himself, he can only be emancipated from it by his own strength: in which case you exhaust the *logical* truth of that work.

But viewed apart from this incidental result, and in point of philosophy strictly, the hypothesis is to the last degree preposterous and atheistic. For it deifies the human will.

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It attributes a distinctly divine force to a created thing. It allows the will a power of determining itself independently of all motives, independently of all foreign influence. Its power is thus self-derived, or self-inherent; and this is the precise characteristic of Divine power. What then could have blinded the originators, or the present supporters, of this pregnant philosophical heresy, to its palpable absurdity? Nothing but the intense and overmastering intellectual obligation they felt themselves under, to vindicate the Divine justice in the condemnation of sin. Looking upon sin as altogether moral instead of spiritual, as a breach of outward law instead of a state of the heart, they supposed that all its bitter fruits were a literal infliction of the Divine hand, and that in order, therefore, to justify such infliction, the sinner himself must be proved wholly chargeable with his sin.

Admit their premises, and you will hardly escape their conclusions by any merely logical dexterity. What the German philosophers have named the reason as contradistinguished

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from the simple understanding, meaning thereby the regenerate understanding, the understanding illuminated by the heart, or truth grounded in good, cordially disavows the hypothesis, and is probably what has kept it from utterly oversweeping the ecclesiastical conscience. But it has a striking logical or formal consistency, and the ready way to deal with it, therefore, is to deny its *substantial* truth, or explode its philosophic contents. Here it is vulnerable to instant death. For, as the gospel teaches, sin is of necessity spiritual before it is moral, is an unconscious state of the soul before it becomes a phenomenon of the activity. The gospel teaches us that all our moral corruption, as evinced by the law, is only a sign or confirmation of an interior spiritual corruption, which no law can fathom, and which only the Divine Love itself can adequately know and overcome. It teaches us that sin becomes imputed or appropriated to us by the law, but never by any possibility that it is *constituted* by the law. It is on the contrary altogether spiritually constituted, or constituted by a par-

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amount love of ourselves over God and our neighbor. This spiritual fountain infallibly issues, it is true, when unrestrained by the Divine power, in all manner of moral obliquity as measured by the Divine standard or law; but God's quarrel is wholly with the fountain, and never with the streams, except as involved in it.

It is this superficial view of sin which animates the New-School logic, and which consequently being removed, lets that logic tumble to the ground. For if sin inheres in the universal selfhood of man, it is evident that God can justly feel no personal animosity to any individual man for exhibiting the vivid fruits of such inheritance in his life. It is evident, in other words, that He must view all men in the same essential spiritual aspect, however much they may differ among themselves in point of moral character; and that all the individual discipline consequently which we incur, however harsh and vindictive it may outwardly appear to be, is yet inwardly full of love and tenderness: for how is it possible that Infinite Love

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should feel any thing but the intensest compassion towards that which it perceives to be, in itself, only and unalterably evil ?

Such, very clearly, is the gospel revelation of that Love, and it teaches us accordingly that the legal relation of the soul to God, which gives rise to this vaunted sentiment of responsibility, befits only an unreconciled state of the heart, and is destined sooner or later to give place to a regenerate one, in which we shall put away our evils, not from a dread of any punishment they involve, but only from a sense of filial and burning love to the great Being, who, by the lavish effusion of His own blood, has redeemed us from the power of hell, and entitled us to the freedom of celestial mansions at His right hand for evermore.

Thus when I feel tempted to lie, to steal, to commit adultery, or do any other social evil, and I think that God will be personally angry with me if I do, and inflict some penalty or other in consequence of such anger: the real truth is heaven wide of the apparent truth. The real truth is that I am already in a state

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of profound spiritual death, seeing that I thus attribute to myself merely personal and independent relations with God, and that He mercifully accommodates His word to these sensuous instincts and impressions of mine, only to win me back in freedom to a renewed spiritual conjunction with Him. These impressions constitute the timid and feeble dawn of my regenerate life, and I see things consequently in an inverted way, or upside down. The natural organ of vision beholds *natural* objects in this inverted manner, and if the animal soul or intelligence were not there to rectify the impression, I suppose that the individual animal —if we can suppose what is *ex vi termini* a contradiction—would always go on to see things in this preposterous fashion.* So my merely natural intelligence inverts spiritual truths, or turns them upside down; and if it were not

* The presumable law of this fact is, that power in every plane descends from a plane superior or interior to that in which it is manifested; hence all true vision in the natural sphere of experience, is really derived from the light of a superior and rational sun.

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for the gradual regeneration of that intelligence, I should remain for ever subject to this fallacious outlook. As I advance in regeneration I perceive that these fallacious appearances of truth have been merely an accommodation to my sensuous intelligence. I then perceive that I am primarily related to God only in a spiritual manner, and that my moral relations to Him are quite subordinate to this primal one. Thus, if the primal or spiritual relation has become obscured, the moral relation becomes all-important in my eyes. I then seem related to God by my actions simply, and not by the spirit out of which they proceed. All this, doubtless, is an immense mercy and condescension on the part of God to our fallen condition, and it all points to that fuller, yea, infinite mercy, and to that eternally adorable condescension which shall one day exhibit Him uniting Himself with human nature, and lifting the latter to the inheritance of His throne in heaven and earth. But this is strictly an accommodated idea of our relation to God. It is not the original and spiritual relation between

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us. It is not the view which God takes of us. His relation to us being creative, lies completely back of the moral sphere, or the sphere of selfhood in us, and hence of necessity stamps this moral life, this life of my activity, the life which to my own fallen intelligence seems so exclusively real and absolute, as a mere adventitious circumstance. He sees that that life is a purely constitutional one, and reflects only my spiritual association, or surroundings. His own intelligence discerns me in a profounder relation to Him than this, that is, in a spiritual relation, or as utterly devoid of life in myself, and as vitally dependent therefore upon Him. Consequently whenever I yield to temptation, what *He* feels is not personal anger and vexation towards me, but only the refluence or regurgitation of those living tides of love wherewith He perpetually enriches my interiors. I interiorly repel the inflow of His love and wisdom, and so commit spiritual suicide. I reject from my interiors the veritable bread of life, and of course subject the Divine love to disappointment and partial

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defeat. In this state of things His love cannot grow cold. He cannot be otherwise than faithful to me. He cannot weakly sympathize with my ignorant sensuality, and allow me to go on unchecked in a career of indulgence. On the contrary He is bound by permitting disaster and suffering to my outward interests, still solicitously to woo me, and soften my soul to the access of wisdom and tenderness from Him. Or when I resist temptation from a sense of reverence towards God, or because the evil which it prompts is a sin against Him, He is then in the fulness of His life's delight; because I thus permit and encourage His spiritual influx into my soul, and enable Him to lift me to otherwise inconceivable summits of celestial bliss.

Sensuously viewed, then, viewed by the light of the natural understanding, I appear full of life or power, and do not hesitate to ascribe all sorts of responsibility to myself. But viewed spiritually, viewed by the light of the Divine judgment, this appearance turns out a gross delusion. God knows that the power I

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seem to possess in myself is a sheer fallacy so far as that seeming is concerned; that it comes from Himself exclusively at every moment; and that it is allowed to take a perverse or evil direction, only because He must, above all things, guard the interests of my freedom, since with these interests are identified all the possibilities of my eventual and perfect spiritual regeneration. Our very humanity consists, as Swedenborg says, in feeling that life is in us as our own. Take this feeling away and you would of course take away the possibility of our becoming spiritually conjoined with God, you would take away whatsoever allies us with the angel and distinguishes us from the brute. Hence the very perfection of the Divine love binds it to the extremest and most jealous watchfulness with respect to the interests of our moral freedom. And rather than impair that freedom, consequently, He must allow a man, if his taste incline him that way, to succumb to every hellish influence, and make himself morally a monster of iniquity. But he who is admitted behind the scenes, and views

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things spiritually, knows that all this boasted moral power of man if looked at in itself, and apart from its sublime spiritual uses, is as empty as a peacock's strut, and as totally incapable of fixing the Divine regard. He knows that it is never the man himself, but always the Lord in him, who overcomes in temptation, and that so far from any merit attaching to the moral subject in transactions of this nature, the praise is exclusively due to the Lord. In the same manner he knows that it is never a man's own power which inclines him to evil, but invariably the power of evil spirits, or hell, and that so far, therefore, from the man himself becoming personally an object of Divine abhorrence, he becomes an object only of the tenderest Divine compassion.

I cannot help recalling, in this connection, the pleasure of a visit I had some years since, from an amiable and estimable gentleman, who was at the time a professor of philosophy in one of our chief seats of learning, to discuss this very question of moral power. My friend was of opinion that man possessed a quite absolute

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power in himself, and hence enjoyed the most strictly moral or personal relations to Deity. He had no idea that sin was a purely spiritual state, or a state of the soul in man: he fancied, on the contrary, that it was primarily a voluntary state, or a state of the activity: and hence he looked upon the sinner as really exposed to the literal wrath of God. In short, he held to the autonomic or self-determining power of the will; "the power," as it is called in the lingo of the school, "of contrary choice;" or, as it should be called in the language of common sense, "the power of standing upon one's head and one's heels simultaneously, and of turning one's self inside out at pleasure."

I denied that man possessed any such power, or that the will was capable of self-determination, and maintained that it invariably obeyed the strongest motive. I illustrated and enforced my position thus: Two cups of tea, the one black, the other green, are presented to me for a choice. I may doubtless put forth my hand and *take* either, without really choosing or preferring it to the other;

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that is, with a view to some object quite distinct from that which governs my choice of the tea, as, for instance, with a view to the playful flattery of a friend, by imitating his tastes, and so forth. But we are not talking of a mere power to take *either* of these teas. Of course we have *such* a power so long as we are indifferent to the relative merits of the teas. We are talking only of a power of *choice* in regard to them, *which is a power of taking one to the exclusion of the other;* and manifestly this is a power which is utterly unintelligible and incredible, unless you make it proceed upon a preliminary judgment as to the respective merits of the teas. One's power of action in regard to the teas is quite unlimited of course, so long as one has no choice in regard to them. But where choice already exists, one's action is necessarily constrained or determined by it.

Now I repeat that my choice or preference in this case *necessarily* proceeds upon a judgment more or less enlightened by experience, as to the superiority of one beverage over the other in point of wholesomeness, agreeableness

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to the palate, or what not: and this judgment furnishes the *motive* or *object* of my choice, furnishes the *reason* why I choose black tea and reject green, furnishes in fact the sole ground for pronouncing my action rational and not automatic. For without this ground, that is to say, unless my choice had involved this preliminary judgment, it would have been merely an act of instinct instead of an act of reason. It is the exact distinction between rational and instinctual action, that the one involves this preliminary judgment, and the other excludes it. Brute instinct often exhibits an operation apparently rational, as in the bee, the beaver, the ant, &c.; but the rationality in these cases is an attribute of the whole nature, and not of the individual subject.

My friend demurred. He admitted of course the existence of the motives alleged, but denied that the choice was determined by them. He held that the choice had the power of eviscerating itself at pleasure, or sending its own organic contents out of doors, without experiencing any collapse, or subsiding into a nonentity. Thus he

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affirmed that *even while feeling the full force of the motives to choose black tea, and while actually choosing it accordingly*, I still had the power of voluntary regurgitation, or could reject the very thing I was at the same time choosing, and choose the very thing I was at the same time rejecting.

I replied that this was simply to deny the reality of choice altogether, or to beg the true question between us, and affirm instead, that while inwardly *choosing* black tea (as between it and green), I had nevertheless the power outwardly to *take* green (as between the inconvenience of doing so and some superior advantage). I had conceded this power of hypocritical action from the first. I insisted therefore upon keeping my friend rigidly to his thesis, which was that we had power inwardly to *choose* (not simply outwardly to *take*) one thing, even while inwardly *choosing* its opposite: which seemed to me very like the power of standing on our head and our heels at the same moment, or of lifting ourselves off the ground by the sole fulcrum of our own waist-

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bands. He had said for example that in the very act of *choosing* to lie, to steal, to commit adultery, I had power to *choose not to do so*, and that I was a sinner whenever I did any of these things, only because I had not exerted this power. I had thereupon fully admitted, that even while inwardly *choosing* to steal (as between the naked doing, and not doing it) I had power *to refrain from actually stealing* (as between the pain imposed by that self-denial, and some superior prudential consideration). That is, I had admitted a power of acting quite independently of our choice in any given case, or so long as our choice was not the sole determining element of the action. But I had denied that in *choosing* to steal I had any contemporaneous power *not* to choose, since this would be to deny the very existence of choice, or keep that existence for ever embryonic; and embryonic choice, or choice which was not yet embodied, was no choice, and therefore unrecognizable. But he had nevertheless stoutly maintained that my entire responsibility in the premises depended upon this power of a

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contrary choice, and I must therefore keep him strictly to his thesis, and cut him off from the manifest *petitio principii* he had attempted.

My friend acknowledged his obligation in the premises, and proceeded as it seemed to me with ever new inefficiency. We had both agreed upon the definition of voluntary or moral action, as invariably involving two elements, an objective and a subjective one. But upon my saying that he utterly vacated the objective element by making choice in any given case *motiveless*, he denied the imputation, saying, "surely in the case you have cited, the object of your choice was the black tea. You chose black tea instead of green. Here was a voluntary act, an act of choice, involving an object and a subject. You A. B. were its subject, the black tea itself was the object."

"But clearly," I rejoined, "it is one thing to make an action or a choice *involve* or *imply* an object, and quite another thing to make it *constitute* that object, which is precisely what you are now doing. I had not looked upon the black tea as the *object* of my choice, but as the

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very choice itself, as its body or concrete form. 'I choose black tea.' Black tea accordingly is the 'thing chosen,' or, as we express it in briefer terms, 'is my choice.' We are not speaking of any abstract *faculty* of choice, but simply of a visible act of choice, a concrete development, taking the outward or bodily form of a preference of black tea over green, and accordingly whether I say that I 'choose black tea,' or that 'black tea is my choice,' I mean one and the same thing, namely, black tea and not green, neither more nor less. My thought is fixed solely upon the difference of black tea in certain respects from green, and not upon my own mental exercises. We say that 'the rainbow is a beautiful sight;' but no one supposes that we mean by that mode of speech to direct attention to our own faculty of vision. The rainbow is the 'sight' or 'thing seen,' just as black tea is my 'choice' under the circumstances supposed, or the 'thing chosen.'

"Black tea accordingly is *not* the object of my choice, since it is the concrete choice itself. It is what constitutes the body or visible form of

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the choice, without which the choice would not exist, and to talk therefore of its furnishing also the object of the choice, or constituting its own object, is to talk very incorrectly to say the least. The only intelligible object of the choice, the only object I obey in giving black tea a preference over green, is a judgment of its superior adaptation to my wants. And to make the black tea objective to itself therefore in this point of view, is virtually also to make it subjective to itself. For if any thing be its own object, then clearly it must be its own subject, and I do not see therefore how, if I allow your logic such fantastic latitude, I shall manage to secure my personal identity, or escape being converted into a cup of scalding black tea, to be taken up in spoonfuls."

My friend replied with many patient and courteous words, acknowledged himself perplexed for the time, but promised as our *sederunt* had grown into midnight, to return in an evening or two, and expose my fallacy to the full blaze of the lamplight. This was twelve years ago, *and I have always suspected that my*

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friend perished on his way home that night, as he has never since returned to keep his promise. I have frequently encountered persons on the street who at first view seemed to be him, but on approaching them they invariably discovered such a blank unconsciousness of any "unfinished business" between us, that I have been always forced to relapse into my original mortuary hypothesis. I greatly deplore my friend's untimely taking-off, for he was better than estimable, he was truly amiable; and when we meet hereafter, as I devoutly hope we shall, in some far-off island of the blest, I have no doubt that his frank and cordial manners will reflect a very superior inspiration to that of the New England theology.

It is futile however to quarrel with the New England theologians. They are simply a tender and unconscious pullulation of the Unitarian germ which is latent in all orthodox philosophizing, and should arouse attention to the pregnant and unsuspected source of the evil, rather than to one of its patent and perishable fruits. The truths upon which the or-

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thodox Theology proceeds utterly surpass the comprehension of the current philosophy, because that philosophy is purely sensuous. And consequently whenever a philosophic justification of these truths is attempted, you find them rapidly despoiled of their salient divinity, and planed down to the level of ordinary nature. This is the weakness of the existing philosophy that it has only a sensuous or naturalistic conception of man. It believes that man *is* something by nature, or *in se*, and hence when it espouses the Christian truth which says that he is nothing by nature or *in se*, and seeks to commend it to the world's acceptance, the truth is invariably discredited and disgraced. Philosophy is not enriched by the result, and Theology is rendered poor indeed. For I take it no theology can be seriously prized by intelligent men, which does not succeed in vindicating the all-sufficiency of the Creator to the creature, or what is the same thing, in proving the creature's blessedness to be in the strict ratio of his unlimited dependence.

The truth is, my friend, and it is a truth

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very apparent to all reflecting persons, that Theology and Philosophy are both at a dead lock. They both refuse to go a step further. They have had greater burdens to bear than their shoulders are any longer adequate to, and they incessantly lift up their wan and weary faces in the school and in the synagogue, with a look too penitent and prayerful long to escape benediction. They have been both alike cursed by the sensuous or naturalistic conception of creation, by the idea of the absoluteness of morality, by the notion that the selfhood is an independent reality. I say *cursed*, because if these fancies be true, there is no outlook for Philosophy but towards Atheism, nor any for Theology but in the direction of Pantheism, both of which conclusions are totally alien and revolting to the common sense of the race. The philosopher is bound to accept Atheism, because he cannot on any milder terms obviate the endless collision of two absolute beings, God and Man. He cannot deny man, because his self-consciousness affirms his reality. He *can* deny God, because God is not given either in

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consciousness or knowledge. And God accordingly is fast becoming omitted from all philosophies which assume to be scientific or "positive."

Theology on the other hand, so long as she is known by that name, cannot afford to give up God: although she, equally with Philosophy, feels the utter impossibility of the task which devolves upon her, namely, to reconcile the absoluteness of the moral or finite element, the absoluteness of the human selfhood, with the infinitude of the Divine existence. What then is Theology bound to do? She is logically bound of course to accept the Hegelian solution of the problem, which starts from the identity of Being and Thought, and makes the infinite and finite only two correlations of the one eternal Substance or Idea, alternately going forth from, and returning into, itself. Nothing short of this will save theology, *on its present naturalistic footing*, from Atheism. And even this will do it only for a time. For the day must come, as it has already come to the frenzied disciples of Hegel, when Pantheism

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will join hands with Atheism, and both cloak their desecrated heads in a doctrine of unbridled Egotism. The laws of the human mind forbid any other issue. If, as our ecclesiastical theology asserts, the finite or moral selfhood possess an independent validity, an absolute reality, or a validity and reality quite independent of the work of Christ and of the authentication that work alone gives it, then it follows very clearly that there are two absolute beings in the universe, and two absolutes are contradictory. The reason is stronger than the senses only by truths, and not by falsities. If therefore our theology binds us to admit falsities or contradictions in our reason, how long do you suppose it will take the senses to prevail over the reason? How long will it be, in other words, before we also shall rationally affirm the Pantheistic solution of the duality in question, and after that subside into the Stygian pool of unmixed licentiousness?

I have treated the problem all along from another point of view, that is to say, from the point of view of the intrinsic or essential sub-

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serviency of the law to the gospel, or what is equivalent, the essential subordination of the moral to the Christian or regenerate life. The popular view of the matter is precisely the view of the church, being that which is derived from sensuous experience, or the tuition of the serpent. We popularly conceive that morality, or the state of selfhood, is self-authenticated, that it is the normal and indefeasible state of man, and never in the least degree suspect it of any latent evil. So far are we from suspecting that selfhood constitutes the grand original corruption of the race, that we look upon it as our true glory and pride, and the sure foundation of our blessedness. How could we do otherwise indeed, under the circumstances? If it really be the lapse from original integrity which I have proved it to be, then of course its subjects just in proportion to the eminence of their attainments in it, must be blind to its true character, that is to say, must glory in what ought to be their shame.

For example, suppose me to be a highly good man, morally estimated. I fulfil all my

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duties, domestic, social, civil, and ecclesiastical, in a most exemplary manner, and commend myself to the deserved respect of my fellow-men. Now on the supposition that this was the original constitution of things, on the supposition that men were endowed with this moral force by the Creator, in order that they might go on to make the very attainments in morality and piety which I have made, and am continuing to make; then it is very clear that I present to myself a picture every way entitled to justify an extreme self-complacency. Of course I joyfully acknowledge the Divine bounty in the premises. I thankfully recognize that it is He alone who has made me thus to differ from the common lot; but still it is all the while "me" to whom the Divine is thus made tributary. It is this little "me" who is at once the legitimate object of the Divine munificence and of my own rejoicing. It is "me" who is thus enriched and adorned by God, and henceforth evidently in my view there are two very important beings in the universe, God and "me," God the author and sustainer of "me" to be sure,

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but "me" none the less absolute and real and delectable on that account, but all the more so. Thus selfhood would have an unlimited swing, provided morality viewed absolutely, or in itself, were the normal state of man.

But now suppose that it were *not* the normal state of man. Suppose that it came in only when man lapsed from his normal state, which was a state of simple dependence and joy in God, irrespective of himself. Then it becomes equally clear, that just in the degree in which this adventitious state governs me, or in which I had attained to eminence in it, must be my blindness to its true character; and, since I must inevitably glory or rejoice in my own attainments, my glory, as I said before, lies in what ought to be my shame. I ought, in case that morality were not the original constitution of things, to be ashamed of considering myself an *absolutely* better man, or a better man in the Divine sight, than my brother. I ought in that case to feel that some subtle diabolical influence was at work fomenting human pride and human disunion by these differences,

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and do my best therefore to recover and reassert the original law of human unity. And yet just in proportion to my admitted moral excellence, would the truth be hopeless of getting access to me. Sinners, those whom the law could never be looked upon as justifying, but only as condemning, these might gladly hail the truth if it were presented to them by some authoritative voice; but as for me, I should clearly regard such a voice as portending nothing but insult and calamity to me and to my class. I should devoutly suppose indeed, that I would be doing God service in putting an effectual stop to it. But surely the case is all written out in the largest characters on the face of the New Testament, and we have no need to reconstruct it.

But all this popular view of the subject is erroneous, as that same New Testament abundantly proves. We there learn that the law was merely a pedagogue to instruct men in Christian doctrine, before Christ himself had come to fulfil that doctrine. We there learn in short that morality, or the sentiment of self-

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hood in man, was in itself an unmixed evil, and must have ruined man quite utterly, had not God availed Himself of it to institute a temporary righteousness, which should be representative of that wherewith He Himself would eventually endow man, and so given it both a use and a dignity of which it is intrinsically destitute. Thus the entire sanction and authority of morality are due to Christ, regarded either as coming or come. Viewed absolutely it is without any sanction, save what it derives from human pride, or the insane ambition on man's part to be as God. Viewed apart from the authentication which it derives either—1, from its having been a preparatory discipline to the doctrine of Christ; or 2, from its having served Him as a basis for eternally uniting in Himself the Divine and human natures; it is a fountain of inexhaustible disease and death. Specious without, it is naught but ashes within, and there is more hope in its curse than in its blessing.

If accordingly, my dear sir, I have been at all successful in my treatment of the problem,

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I must by this time have prepared you for the conclusion to which I would bring you: that Theology and Philosophy are no longer practicable but by the enlargement and distinct Christianization of our cosmological science. All the theologic and philosophic infirmities we have encountered, inhere in the naturalistic theory of creation. So long as we suppose creation to have been primarily a physical exploit of God, or an operation in space and time, we necessarily render it absolute, and consequently inaugurate an internecine war between the Divine and human natures. We must, therefore, reverse our method, and look upon creation as primarily a spiritual process, and only *by strict derivation from that*, a physical one. What God creates is not things but men. His being or perfection is not physical but spiritual, or human. He is not a fact, but the truth of all facts. He is not a thing, but the life of all things. His power consequently is not physical or muscular, since this is a power strictly finite, being measured by obstacles, but spiritual, or the power of Goodness and Truth. It does not

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descend to compete with human sinews, nor does it envy the tiger his victorious spring. It is not exerted mechanically or as an outward force—in which case of course it would immediately disqualify all the forces of nature, and swallow them up—but dynamically, as the force of an inward or spiritual life.

God creates man truly, not by giving him natural or brute existence, but by communicating Himself to him, or imparting His own good and truth to him. I am therefore not a true creature of God in respect merely to my natural or constitutional endowments, but chiefly in respect to my spiritual and characteristic endowments. God's true creature is the regenerate man, or the man who is begotten *super*-naturally. In short, creation is regeneration, and it includes generation or the natural birth only as an incident of its own progress. The selfhood or moral force, on this theory, becomes transformed from an absolute to a contingent existence, from a final to a mediatorial possession of man, and a true cosmology accordingly will no longer start from time and space, which

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are the laws of physical existence merely, but from Infinite Love and Wisdom, which are the source of spiritual existence. In this way we answer all the demands of a philosophic or rational Theology. For if the absoluteness of the moral life, or the independence of the selfhood, be proved to be a sensuous fallacy instead of a rational truth ; if it be proved that conscience, or the sentiment of responsibility, is not an original and essential endowment of the soul, but only a temporary lieutenancy instituted during the spiritual night of the soul, or its lapse from Divine life, and intended to endure only till such time as the soul can be redeemed from death, and reinstated in that life : why then very clearly Philosophy and Theology are relieved of their present distress, and are no longer bound to reconcile two conflicting absolutes, two reciprocally derogatory beings. They find that there is in truth but one being in the universe, God, and that He incessantly gives to man THE SEMBLANCE OR APPEARANCE of being, because *unless man appeared to himself to be*, the life of heavenly and eternal blessed-

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nesss, which it is His delight to communicate, could have never taken place.

The whole strain as well as drift of your book, is, to show that men are not new-created when they come into the world, but only new-born, *their creation having been identical with some previous natural birth.* Thus you perceive that it is your habit, and that of the large and respectable circle you represent, *to regard creation as a fact physically constituted.* You suppose that the real man is not the internal spiritual man, but the visible natural man, and that in order to God's intimate commerce with him, He must first traverse this outlying rampart of flesh and blood. For man being himself in your view a fact of time and space, God becomes by the necessity of His distinction from man, an infinitely greater fact of the same pattern. The ecclesiastical tradition of the resurrection is strictly analogous. So completely does it confound man with his physical constitution, that it makes the resurrection to consist in a literal redintegration of his dispersed dust. Now all this is very deplorable, because it in-

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duces in the sphere of theology such imbecile practical results. Why of all things in the universe should Theology be denied the privilege of expansion, and remain rigidly tethered to the dilapidated play-ground and disreputable trundle-bed of its original infancy? The child outgrows in time the dominion of the natural senses, correcting their fallacious judgments by the influence of reason. But as you have painfully shown, Theology in orthodox hands feels neither ebb nor flow, neither growth nor decay, neither motion nor rest, neither night nor day, and vindicates its perennial claim to be the nearest approach to a veritable nonentity the genial nature of things allows. The consequence is, that every flippant geological or hetero-logical tyro drives the stoutest champions of orthodoxy into endless contradiction, and fancies he has put out the universal sun of things, because he has snuffed some artificial and sputtering candle. How common also is it to find the most instructed minds all the world over, if they outwardly conform to the church for the sake of its political or social uses, sedu-

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lously uncommitted to its dogmas! We are all more or less aware of this fact.

What is palpably wanted therefore is a *spiritual* cosmology, which shall transfigure the literal or Mosaic one with the lustre of Christian truth, and from a gaunt unhandsome skeleton, convert it into a graceful and glowing form of life. It is totally incredible to the cultivated understanding, that the relation of Creator and creature should be a relation of more and less, or the same in kind as that between two creatures. It is totally incredible that God should be absolutely related to me, that is, by the laws of space and time. The horse, the ox, the ass, and yet viler things than these, are thus externally tied to me. I know them only as subjects of nature, or as phenomena of space and time. Is it conceivable then that the Divine relation, which is a creative one, should fall into the same superficial category; and that I should know the author of my being by no more intimate and sweeter ties than I know a fellow-creature? The bare statement of the question answers it. God my creator

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must be infinitely nearer to me than any creature is, and if this nearness cannot be given in space and time, but is indeed pointedly excluded thence, the inference is irresistible that the world of space and time is not the real or substantial world, is not the world to which primarily God gives being, that is, creates.

The real or substantial world, the true sphere of the Divine creation, is the world of affection and thought. God's being or perfection is not material, but spiritual. It is the being or perfection of Love and Wisdom. And His true creatures accordingly must be derivative forms of love and wisdom. The finite world, the world of nature, in which time and space are fixed, is doubtless of indispensable use to embody this interior world, and afford it conscious development: but it is not the true world any more than a man's body is the true man. One's physical perfection may be greatly impaired: he may lose his arms and his legs, and grow blind and deaf in addition. You would not thereupon say that he had lost his manhood. You would say doubtless that its means of

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manifestation were impaired, or wholly destroyed perhaps; but you would not doubt that the same love of truth and goodness which marked him before, marked him still, and that the Divine sap which formerly made his branches vigorous and his leaves green, still flowed in ample currents about his unseen heart or roots.

What is it that you value in your own activity? Is it not exclusively the spiritual force it expresses, the affection and thought which lie underneath it? In your intercourse with your family, your church, and the world, do you find yourself laying the chief stress upon the literal form, or upon the spiritual substance? Do you not habitually teach your children, that they must not lie nor deceive, but study to be truthful in all things: that is to say, that they must make the outward act truly *serve* or express the inward fact? Do you not habitually teach your congregation, that the letter of all righteousness, if separate from the spirit, only the more surely killeth; and that it is the spirit in every case which giveth life? Do you not in your intercourse

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with society, habitually hug to your heart the man who inwardly *is* what he outwardly seems, even though he were the humblest of the humble, while you cordially consign his spiritual opposite, though placed upon a throne, to the nethermost Antipodes!

But now if this teaching and this conduct of yours are manly and sensible, as all the world will avouch them to be, it is only because they are conformed to the truth of things, or because they make the spiritual world real and substantial, and the natural world purely ministerial or subordinate.

I know it is very hard to the unpractised intellect to conceive of spiritual existence; but this difficulty is wholly attributable to mental pre-occupation. Our minds are pre-occupied with the phenomena of natural or material existence, and in this circumstance lies the difficulty we experience in conceiving of spiritual existence. For spiritual and natural existence are diametrically opposite. The one confesses a purely inward genesis or origin, the other a purely outward one. Thus the tree, the horse,

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or the man whom I see with my natural eye, all suppose a previous natural generation to account for them. Some other men and trees and horses must have previously existed in order to the present existence of the man and horse and tree in question. So entirely fixed a connection is there, indeed, between all the facts of nature, so strictly affiliated is every present phenomenon to some similar phenomenon in the past, so stanchly does each refer itself to some other, and that again to some other, that the mind which is exclusively conversant with nature, learns to distrust the very existence of causation, and merges it in the philosophic platitude of invariable antecedence.

Here accordingly lies the difficulty we experience in discerning spiritual existence. We do not see it with the same organs wherewith we discern natural existence. It has no external features of dissimilarity with natural existence, because it is within *all* natural existence, accepting the latter as its cuticle or external clothing. The natural senses accordingly are incapable of appreciating spiritual facts.

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Thus, suppose me intent upon fulfilling the Divine command to love my neighbor, and a worthless vagabond, whom I know to be idle and dissolute, applies to me for bread. I decline giving him any. Here is a spiritual act, an act of love in the truest sense to my neighbor. Yet the senses are totally unable to perceive it. They see the bare denial of food to the applicant, but they are totally incapable of discerning the spiritual relation to him on my part out of which the denial proceeds, and of referring the transaction consequently to that superior realm. Much less even, if that be possible, is the natural eye capable of discriminating the specific differences of spiritual activity; for an action may, in all outward respects, be precisely the same, and yet proceed inwardly from sources as remote and opposite as heaven and hell. Thus, I may feed my enemy from a sentiment either of humility or of pride. I may do it either from a spirit of brotherly love, or one of self-love, either from a genuine desire to relieve the necessities of a fellow-being, or merely from a desire to attract the applause

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of my fellow-men. Accordingly, the spiritual character of the action of necessity eludes the natural eye, and becomes pronounced only where an inner sense has been quickened, only where a spiritual perception has become developed, adequate to the precise phenomenon.

If, therefore, we would reach the true sphere of the divine creation, and comprehend in a rational manner the laws to which it is subject, we must penetrate to this interior or spiritual world which is lodged within the human bosom. Only let us remember always that the spiritual world is not lodged *spatially* within our bosoms. That is to say, it is not lodged there as a pound of figs is lodged in a box, or as one's foot is lodged in his boot, but correspondentially, that is, as sensation and volition are lodged in a muscle, or as affection and intelligence are lodged in an action. Spiritual existences are not forms of matter, but forms of love and wisdom, and hence intensely human. When, therefore, we speak of the spiritual world, we attribute to it no vague or hazy aspect. We think of it as of a world of most real men and

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women, as of a world indeed in which man alone exists, and all inferior things, as animal, vegetable, and mineral, only by virtue of a strict derivation from him. You may indeed ask me reproachfully, "How can a man exist save materially? What is moral or spiritual existence unless predicated of a physical or material subject?" Let me answer you by asking you a question or two in my turn. Your highest experiences, those which redeem you most from brutality, and ally you most with humanity, your moments of humility, of adoration, of love, of sympathy with your kind, were these your most voluble moments, moments in which your material organization lent you its readiest service? On the contrary, have not these been precisely the moments when the body cowered like a trembling hound at the feet of its master, and confessed its utter unworthiness to come into that high communion? I perfectly anticipate your answer. The material body is needful and good when the soul is materialized or accommodated to it; but in sabbatical moments, when the soul, by some

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Divine epiphany, finds its keepers asleep and its prison doors unbarred, and goes abroad to drink the immortal airs of Paradise, we feel the material body to be a hindrance and a drag, and oftentimes prematurely, no doubt, cry aloud to be delivered from it. We see, then, very plainly that the best part of our human experience even here is unassisted by the material body, is even impaired by its fellowship; and hence we infer very reasonably that spiritual existence in proportion to its perfection, exacts a subtler and more pliant incorporation than consists with material substance.

Of course I know very well that nothing can seem more unreal and insubstantial to the mass of men than such a world. The mass of men are wholly abandoned to the pursuit of material good, and have scarcely any belief left in a superior good. Yet to men like yourself, men of reflection and refined nurture, how flat and vapid the world of nature seems, when estimated apart from its distinctively humanitary substance, or when divested of the sanctity it owes to the sole presence of distinctively hu-

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man worth! Take, for example, your relation to your wife, your child, your friends, and cogitate these ties for a moment as divested of their peculiarly human pith or marrow, and resolved into their purely animal or sensuous elements. Do they not become instantly and intolerably loathsome? Do not the total charm and sanctity of the conjugal and parental tie, and the tie of friendship consist in the service they render, in the conduct they afford, to an infinite inner world of affection, aspiration, joy, purpose, endeavor, which subtends this outer one, and clothes it with the sole glory it possesses in the eye of humanity? Wherein does the conjugal tie differ from that of harlotry, save that the one ministers to every gentle and disinterested and human affection, and the other degrades man more and more to the level, and below the level, of the brutes? In what is the parental tie better than that of master and slave, unless it serve to bring down from the heaven of the paternal mind, goodness and truth and beauty in forms fit to be inseminated in the earth of the filial mind? And wherein

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does the tie of friendship excel that of ordinary business commerce, save that it gives occasion to all those sentiments of generosity, magnanimity, and devotion which are out of place in the other, and which accordingly redeem the world of human dealing from utter blight? Consider for a moment the natural universe as divested of humanity. Can any thing be presented to your imagination so ghastly and abhorrent as the conception of this fair universe given over to the dominion of animal life, turned into a hot-bed of gigantic reptiles, and a nursery of nameless and obscene monsters, whose empire should know no law or limit but that of their own hideous might?

If, therefore, the world of nature itself refers all its interest and beauty to humanity, if it derives all its order and dignity and sweetness from its majestic human coronal, how much more true must this be of the spiritual world, or the world which is to nature what substance is to form, or soul to body! The spiritual world accordingly is a purely personal world, or a world in which character has free

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play; and as character or personality belongs only to man, so I presume the spiritual world is *par excellence* the human world, or a world in which every phenomenon, mineral, vegetable, and animal, confesses itself, not as here a fixed and constant existence, but a mere correspondence or reflection of something in man.

No doubt he to whose thought the laws of time and space seem essential, may say, "How can such a world get created, or set a-going? One sees very well how animals and minerals and vegetables are created or set a-going in this world, namely, by natural generation, or by dint of other and precedent animals, vegetables, and minerals. How such things, therefore, can be created without natural generation, and by dint only of human affections and thoughts, is what I do not readily conceive. Besides, what should cause the difference? If no horse gets born in this world without the congress or copulation of other horses, if no cabbage is produced here without the fructification of some preceding cabbage, why should it not be so there? Whence accrues the enormous difference?"

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The inquirer's difficulty lies in his regarding this world, the world of nature, as of like reality with the other world, when in point of fact the natural world is not at all the world of reality, but only the world of appearance. The truth of things is that EVERY THING EXISTS SOLELY BY THE DIVINE POWER; but to the sensuous intelligence of man this truth is wholly unrecognized, and every thing is deemed to exist by some inherent or natural force of its own. And as man's interiors generate his exteriors, as his affections and thoughts create his circumstances, or govern his sensible experience, so it is evident that the sensuous fallacy he is under with respect to creation, must organize the world he inhabits, or be seen to regulate all its phenomena. Hence accordingly we find man's initial perception of creation represented or reproduced in the world of nature, a world in which every thing seems fixed and constant, and creation resolves itself into mere natural generation. Unless creation put on this initial shape, and so accommodated itself to the human intelligence, that intelligence would be simply

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inoperative and lifeless, for so long as it does not recognize the perfect truth of things, it must either recognize an imperfect and fallacious appearance thereof, or else cease to act, and an intelligence which ceases to act ceases also to live.

Accordingly, the world of nature is not the real world, is not the true sphere of the Divine creation, but only an accommodation or modification of that sphere to a purely sensuous intelligence. The fact of man's creatureship, or of his total dependence upon another for the all of his being and life, requires that all his knowledge should be inductive, and all his virtue experimental. If his goodness were inherent instead of experimental, if his wisdom were intuitive instead of inductive, he would be God, not man. He may indeed in his infancy, whether as a race or an individual, possess a *quasi* or inherited goodness, growing out of his ignorance or inexperience of his true selfhood or character. But in neither case does this possession abide. The rule for both the individual and the race runs, that no goodness endures but

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that which is qualified by intelligence, or receives its form from Truth; and the highest Truth—that of the infinite Divine perfection—when sensuously or literally revealed, takes the form of an exhibition of man's innate and total destitution of life, of his utter worthlessness *in se*. This is the very rudiment and beginning of true Divine knowledge, to know that we are nothing in ourselves. And hence man's natural experience, or his experience of a world conformed to his sensuous intelligence, and yet capable of suggesting to him an infinitely superior or super-natural one.

Now if all this be true, if nature be but the rude husk and shell as it were of creation, it is of course totally inadmissible to argue from the natural world to the spiritual, or measure the realities of the one by the purely fallacious appearances of the other. This would be to judge of a man's countenance by his cast-off clothing, or to estimate the drawing-room of a palace by a glance at the kitchen and scullery. The natural world at the very best is only a seminary or nursery for the spiritual world, and its

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profoundest science, so valuable in its place, sinks into childish prattle before the transcendent verities of that superior sphere. Let the inquirer take heed to himself therefore, if he would not incur the most serious of mistakes. He may if he please continue to insist that there is no creation possible save by natural generation, but this only proves that he himself is still under the dominion of the natural mind, and hence incapable of spiritual discernment.

But surely I need not endeavor to vindicate spiritual existence to you. You happily admit its reality quite as fully as I do, and hence I am not called upon to urge home an unwelcome truth. Indeed there can be no demonstration of spiritual realities to unwilling minds. The affections determine every man's intellectual state, and if accordingly a man be a self-seeker spiritually, or claim a paramount Divine regard for himself or his sect over other men and other sects, the Divine mercy itself provides that he also deny spiritual or immortal life, and accept instead the falsity which coheres with his de-

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praved affections. Immortal life pertains to no man by any outward gift or tenure, but purely by virtue of renovated affections, and if these affections are wanting, a man must be as incapable of acknowledging that life on the other side of the grave as on this. But, I repeat, you and I have happily no doubts on the subject. We both alike admit the great truth of spiritual existence, and are so far in thorough unity. If then I have seemed to linger upon the topic, while recapitulating the results we have come to, it has been only in order that our reciprocal conceptions of the truth might be so harmoniously adjusted, as to insure our seeing with equal clearness its inevitable logical consequences.

And after all I must end by conjuring you both as a scholar and an earnest disciple of Christ, to betake yourself without delay to the fountain head of rational illumination on this subject, in the writings of Swedenborg. I anticipate the intellectual rapture you will one day experience, when you see that inner world of which he speaks, and which now lies in the dark

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inane so voiceless and dead to all human prayer, emerge into substantial being, its glittering ranks instinct with the most intimate human love, and its myriad industries impelled by the sole force of spontaneous and untasked human delight. It is a scandal to men of your mark in the church, men of independent mental habits, who feel moreover the church's insatiable present exigency, that you should have so long accepted the judgment of interested ignorance and quackery in relation to this man, nor have tried for yourselves the invincible armor he has forged for heaven's truth. I remember to have heard one of our professors at Princeton, while lecturing to the class in *Ecclesiastical History*, exhibit his masterly incompetence somewhat to this effect: "We must not omit from our survey of this period the name of Emanuel Swedenborg, a most learned and pious man, whose head appears to have been turned by unknown causes, and who consequently fancied himself in continual colloquy with the apostles. It is related of him, that whenever he sat down to dine, he had twelve plates laid

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also for the apostles, who were invariably present to dine with him. Strange hallucination!"

This was the harlequin costume, which a most amiable and conscientious person felt himself authorized to put for our instruction and diversion, upon the sanest and most far-reaching intellect the world has yet known. This was the complacent and puny estimate *his* sagacity had framed of one, whose massive step was even then shaking the ill-cemented edifice in which he lectured, and whose majestic voice will one day silence the venal wrangling of the sects, as the crash of heaven's thunder silences the tumult of the dovecote and the rookery. And this is the sort of judgment, two parts ignorance, two parts sectarian self-complacency, which I would have men like you disown, for the sake of some direct and positive knowledge.

The great truth which Swedenborg brings to the illustration of the past as to the illumination of the future, is the truth of the Divine Natural Humanity. The New Testament affirms this truth dogmatically, and without

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shedding any light upon its rational contents. Indeed the sects have not done disputing, as yet, whether it actually does so much as make this dogmatic affirmation. Swedenborg however leaves them to settle their quarrel according to their several instincts, and quietly proceeds to unfold the interminable interior things which go to the formation of that truth. He opens up a transcendent physiology, showing us the laws of spiritual existence, and bringing us for the first time in rational contact with the primal substances and powers of the world. He proves that the things we have always thought the vaguest and most powerless, are in truth the most substantial and creative. Thus love and wisdom which are the most inconspicuous things possible to the carnal apprehension, turn out to be the essential Powers of the universe, and admirably elucidate all the detail and all the harmony of its multifarious life. He steers as we have seen, a thousand miles wide of the devouring rock which has wrecked every argosy that has hitherto tempted, with portly sails, the perils of that silent and mystic sea. He

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denies indeed at the very outset that God has power to create absolute life, or a creature which shall live of itself, and makes it a strict corollary of His uncreated perfection, that He should be able to create only forms, organs, receptacles, subjects, of life. This is the magic spell which makes every wind propitious, and every current available, and finally brings the brave and reverent adventurer to a secure anchorage in the crystal river, whose streams make glad the eternal city of God.

Swedenborg never attempts to captivate your assent to his statements by argument. As a more wonderful Humboldt indeed, he carries you into regions before untrodden of mortal feet; but he no more essays to reason you into a belief of the *audita et visa* he encounters there, than Humboldt attempts to convince you argumentatively of the tropical *fauna* and *flora* whose existence he witnessed in South America. Reasoning is manifestly out of place in either case. It is always the resort of those who do not possess the truth, and are therefore free to argue whether there

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be any such thing as truth or not. Ratiocination is the art of turning the true into the probable; that is, of lowering truth and heightening falsity. For truth is only truly seen by its own light; and when you reduce it therefore to a merely probable existence, you obviously obscure its intrinsic evidence, and to that extent of course brighten the evidence of the opposite falsity. Nothing accordingly is more common than to find a brilliant dialectician able to argue either side of a question with equal plausibility, making the better reason appear the worse, and the worse the better, interchangeably. He who possesses the truth, possesses also an interior witness of it which is all-sufficing, namely, the love of it which dwells in his heart; and all the communications of such a person are of a positive character, being yea, yea, or nay, nay. Only he therefore who does not possess it, ever feels compelled to vindicate its existence by a resort to the lower ground of probability. Thus Humboldt reports the orderly facts which meet his eye in the southern hemisphere, and there

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he stops. He gives you such insight doubtless as his science permits into the laws which govern their generation, but he never for a moment puts the actual existence of the facts in doubt. The very truth of his experience indeed disqualifies him to reason about its reality. If the denizen of Berlin cavil at his narrative, and allege the lower temperature which surrounds him there, by way of disproving tropical vegetation, you would not expect Humboldt to sit down, and solicitously argue with the skeptic. You would expect him at most to bestow a passing sigh upon human imbecility, and go forward in the career of observation so obviously congenial to his faculties.

The case is altogether similar with Swedenborg. Supposing his experience of the spiritual world to be real, his writing could not possibly differ from what it is. He states with the utmost precision the laws of that world, or the principles out of which all its phenomena proceed; but he never attempts to persuade you of the existence of these phenomena by an appeal to the laws of this lower world. He very

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courteously awaits your ascent to his side, by virtue of the ladder of spiritual principles he has let down to your understanding; but he is invariably guiltless of the insane endeavor to justify spiritual existences upon natural principles. Proselytism accordingly never enters his head. He knows very well that every man whose soul is inwardly attuned to angelic fellowship, will some day or other, in this world or the next, infallibly learn these supernal tidings, and become enrolled in that evangelic company which shall yet fill every desolate place with the healing and fruitful presence of God. And he consequently feels no prurient desire to precipitate so assured an event. Above all things he would be sorry to compel any averted or reluctant attention. For none so well as he knows the watchful love which proportions the intellect to the affections, and prevents the soul receiving an excess of truth beyond the wants of the life.

There is no need of my again going over those laws of spiritual existence which allow the introduction of evil into the universe. The

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naked truth upon which we have already sufficiently commented, that man is only an organ or subject of life, instead of being life itself, exhibits him, as we have seen, under a necessary constitutional *liability* to error, and restricts us therefore to the simple inquiry whether this liability has ever actually issued in error or not. Incontestably it has so issued. The whole world is full of the scars of that great catastrophe. Conscience itself, as we have seen, furnishes an irresistible witness of its truth. It testifies to a lapse of man from the sentiment of dependence to that of independence; from a state of childlike and innocent joy in God to one of pride and complacency in himself. And it represents God as accommodating His intercourse to this lapsed spiritual estate of man, and addressing him as if He also acknowledged his independence, and held him legitimately responsible for his own conduct. Conscience in fact is God's formal ratification of, or acquiescence in, the fall of man. It exhibits God as condescending to the perverse mind of His creature, and dealing with him henceforth in strict-

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est accordance with its fallacious principles. It represents Him as virtually saying to the creature : " You have now departed from the path of rectitude originally opened up to you, and chosen to follow instead the devious paths of self-seeking. The possibility of this issue has always been inseparable from your finite constitution ; and now that the issue has become converted from a possibility into an actuality, it behooves me not to complain, but simply to descend to your level, and by thus authenticating your mistake, do what I can to redeem you from its otherwise inevitably fatal consequences."

Now of course the attitude which conscience here assigns to God with reference to the fall, is utterly incredible on any other hypothesis than a foresight on the part of God, of the eventual union of the divine and human natures, or of His ultimate Incarnation. For obviously if the fall of man were an absolute event, or a purely moral transaction, such as our divines are wont to represent it, it would have been a gross departure from His own integrity, for God

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to have acquiesced in it, or accommodated Himself in any sense to it. If the fall were an event of the moral sphere, it was an entirely conscious event on man's part : that is to say, it implied a previous moral or independent relation between him and God, which relation could not have changed from a positive to a negative character, from one of favor to one of disfavor, without his intimate and perfect cognizance of the fact. If in this state of things therefore God should at once report Himself to man in an aspect of clemency, or as holding forth a promise to him of ultimate deliverance from the consequences of his sin, it is quite clear that man's fidelity to the original tenure of their relation, must have prevented his believing the promise ; must have forbid him in short to expect any other treatment at the hands of God than unmixed vengeance. The original relation being a moral one, life for man must have consisted only in unfaltering obedience. If therefore when he disobeyed and encountered death, the Divine hand were seen to interpose warding off this consequence, and ultimately

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restoring him to fulness of life; the inference would be inevitable that he had been hitherto under an hallucination; that life did not really consist in obeying God, and death in disobeying Him; since here was a case of signal disobedience, not merely unvisited by death, but Divinely soothed and softened by the promise of an ulterior transcendent blessing. Thus in this pretended aspect of things, the Divine honor must have been fatally compromised in His creature's estimation; and the Divine promise, instead of attracting confidence and gratitude, must have only awakened suspicion, disgust, and denial. It is therefore strictly incredible that the Divine Love from the very inception of creation, should not have contemplated Redemption as its central and effulgent glory; and consequently have ordained all things in its intercourse with man, to typify and subserve the stupendous truth of its ultimate adequate Incarnation and Glorification in Jesus of Nazareth.

The truth of truths, then, if estimated only by its scientific consequences, is the Divine

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Natural Humanity, or the sole and supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ. In Christ the human selfhood was perfectly united to the Divine Infinitude, so that it became thenceforth impossible that any cosmical or universal disorder should again ensue from its promptings. It was in Him disarmed of its malignity, evacuated of its venom, and made intimately and intensely one with the infinite Divine Love. In Him the Divine became Human, and the Human became Divine. Of course man's spiritual freedom not only remained unimpaired by this event, but it actually became restored and augmented. He had been rapidly losing his freedom before that event. The increase of evil in the spiritual world was fast overpowering the influence of good; so that man in nature no longer enjoyed his wonted self-poise, but began to obey the predominant spiritual influence instinctively, as it were. Christ, by perfectly subjugating the hells, and reducing them to his eternal obedience, redeemed man from this spiritual vassalage, and saved him from the rapid and utter destruction which it foreboded.

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Of course, if He had done this only for the time, the boon would have been inconsiderable, and might as well have been withheld. But He did it effectually and for ever, by perfectly glorifying his humanity, or uniting it with the uncreated Divinity; so that henceforth A GLORIFIED NATURAL MAN sits upon the throne of the universe, and is at once the source and the measure of all the life that is felt either in heaven or in hell.

The difference accordingly between now and then; between the state of human freedom before the coming of Christ, and its state after His coming; is that before that event it was liable to a total loss and overthrow, and now it no longer exhibits such liability, being in fact ensured an incessant consolidation and increase. Then the evil man, the man who lent himself to the influence of hell, was sure in the long run to become its abject menial and uncomplaining drudge; while even the good man, or the man who cultivated the influx of heavenly dispositions, continually felt his power impaired, and his freedom abridged, by this grow-

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ing iusurrection on the part of the evil. But now all this is changed. Man may now be as good or evil as he pleases, without any undue help or impediment from without; simply because heaven and hell are now both alike utterly subject and obedient to the Divine. Before the Incarnation, the Divine power was incompetent to deal with the hells. What, for example, could the infinite Goodness experimentally know of the lust of covetousness, of revenge, of falsehood, of adultery? And if He did not experimentally know these lusts, how should He proceed to deliver man from their thraldom? But by taking upon him flesh, so as to become in all points tempted like as we are, He experienced the intensest fellow-feeling of our infirmities, and so became able to bring the evil or infernal principle in all its ramifications, into such complete and unswerving subjection to the good or celestial principle, as practically to recreate or regenerate human nature.

And this accordingly is the exact truth of the case, is the truth which gives to the hith-

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erto inert dogma of Christ's divinity, such an immense scientific consequence. Human nature is re-created in Christ. The natural selfhood of man, which was in itself the sole source of evil, is regenerated in Him, and becomes the fulcrum of otherwise inconceivable exhibitions of Divine power and glory. Of course I do not say that the glorification of Christ renders any man spiritually regenerate. Man's spiritual regeneration means his interior sympathy with goodness and truth, or a life of unaffected Divine reverence, which shall eternally associate him with the angels. This process accordingly is a purely inward and spiritual one, affecting the individual's unseen and intimate relations with God. But his natural regeneration is quite a different thing. It means the regeneration of that common or natural tie which unites him with all other men. This result is a legitimate and unavoidable fruit of Christ's glorification. Before that event took place, the natural selfhood of man was disunited with God, and only held in such enforced subjection as an appeal to its hopes and fears permitted.

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But by that event it became actually united with God, so as to become thenceforth the medium and measure of the Divine influx into man. The effect upon nature, therefore, cannot but be proportionate. The bottom of the hill had been attained under man's own leadership: to mount, and evermore to mount, became thenceforward the destiny of nature in subjection to Christ. For this degraded natural selfhood of ours was now utterly purged of its defilement, and glorified into the intensest unity with God. It had become the inseparable channel of the Divine communications to man, and consequently no man thereafter born of woman, could fail to feel, whatever his spiritual relations to God, a softening Divine influence upon his natural existence.

Accordingly we know that the world has been scientifically advancing ever since Christ's day. I do not mean to say, I repeat, that men have been *spiritually* changed since that time. I do not mean to say that there are not as many evil men spiritually considered, that is, as many heirs of hell, in present society as there have

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been in any past society. I do not doubt that there are quite as many; and I devoutly adore God that their number, great as it is, stands no chance of diminution by any arbitrary or compulsory interference on His part. All I mean to say is, that men have been *naturally* changed and softened since that day: that whereas nature was previously committed to corruption, it is now pledged to the largest sanity and health. Its downward tendencies have been powerfully arrested, and upward, unalterably upward, tendencies communicated. Before Christ's day, the selfhood had only a finite authentication, save such as came from God through conscience or the moral law. It dated or started altogether from man. But now it dates from the supreme God Himself. God is henceforth the source and origin of this mighty stream, and all its tiny rivulets are beginning to reflect the ample parentage. The world is bound accordingly to a career of scientific advancement and prosperity, such as no uninspired imagination can paint. Look at the Temperance cause. Look at the Anti-slavery sentiment. Look at the

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efforts to reclaim the Magdalen. Look at the zeal for education. Look at the various societies for the improvement of the condition of the poor. Look at the immense criticism of our social evils of all sorts. Look at the gathering determination of society to put away its own evils, to crush the business of the rum seller, to extinguish the hell of the gambler, to shut up the brothel, to stifle rowdyism. I say look at all these things, and then tell me whether you believe that the heartiest actors and movers in them, are what you would deem spiritually good or renewed men? The idea is preposterous. Many of them seem to me on the contrary abundantly diabolic men, and to be all the while combating Satan with weapons forged in his own flames. What then? Why it only proves what I say to be true, that the world itself is feeling an influx of regeneration, and that its leading minds are everywhere expanding to the beneficent influences of the Divine Humanity in its purely natural sphere of operation. Of old time God was the Beginning, but only in Christ did He become the Ending

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also. Before the Incarnation He could truly claim to have been the source from which all things proceeded. It is only since that event that He can claim also to be the haven to which they all return. He is now and ever more both the First and the Last, both the Alpha and the Omega; and there is consequently no nook of His creation so small and mean as to escape the glance of his infallible and purifying sympathy. Let the evil doers look out therefore: let the mere politicians, let the mere ecclesiastics, let all men who live a parasitic life, and *exploit* humanity for their own private or professional ends, beware: for a storm is rising and a bolt is forging, which when once their fury is let out, will leave no vestige of established iniquity to deface God's renovated earth.

But I must stop, and yet there is one word remaining to be said, which I am already committed to say, and which moreover I am unwilling to leave unsaid. Bear with me therefore for ten minutes longer, and I will release you from any further obligation to listen.

I have said in a former part of this Letter

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that "it was entirely impossible that the spiritual force of the gospel could be discerned in Christ's day; and it was therefore inevitable that the Jewish legalism should become gradually filtered and defecated through the Christian ecclesiasticism, before the divine features of the former could be worthily apprehended."

Christ was born a Jew. He was born in the lowest, that is to say, spiritually considered, the most external or carnal of all the tribes of the earth. They had fallen so much below the ordinary type of spiritual manhood, that their government took the shape of a most rigid and jealous Theocracy, a theocracy which extended not merely to their civil and political relations, but to their most insignificant domestic and personal concerns, regulating the commerce of man and wife, of parent and child, of master and servant, and prescribing even the diet and dress of the worshipper. Clearly such a system of theocratic supervision and direction as this, is compatible only with the lowest possible spiritual condition in the subject, or the lowest possible conceptions of God. The spiritual or

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heavenly man cannot believe that God cares what he eats or drinks, or has the least desire to regulate the cut of his coat or the tie of his shoe. For he believes that God cares only for the disposition of the heart, well knowing that where that is right the diet will never be hurtful, nor the cut of the coat preposterous. The spiritual man cannot believe either that God cares a whit for the civil administration of a country, whether it be monarchical or republican, so long as the progress of human fellowship or society is the best promoted. For he believes that God has at heart only the interests of universal man, and is perfectly willing to let these interests shape their own best instrumentalities and institutions in every sphere. The Jewish theocracy was thus the strongest evidence of the intense carnality of the Jewish mind. Viewed nationally, no mind upon earth dwelt so habitually in forms regardless of substance. Of course there must have been many individual exceptions in the nation, but the national type itself is one of unparalleled frivolity. Only think to what a pitch of formality,

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and in the proper sense of the word, of sensuality, its idea of God must have sunken, before one of its armies could have stood still, every man in his place and his arms within reach, and meekly allowed itself to be hewn in pieces by the Roman legions, rather than dishonor God by fighting on the Sabbath. Individuals in all nations have been found capable of the extremest cruelties towards their own persons, with a view to propitiate the Divine regard. But what other nation ever lived on earth, capable *en masse* of such superstition? And what is perhaps still more striking, you will find the most of their descendants to this very day proud of that patient blasphemy, and willing to believe that God does really esteem one people and one day above other people and other days.

Yet this theocracy was a great and blessed fact of history, whatever reflection it legitimately sheds upon the subject mind of the Jew. It was full of a Divine benignity and promise, and was intended to be adequately fulfilled in Him to whom all the law and all the prophets bear exclusive witness. God was here seen conde-

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scending to the minutest legislation for the purely carnal mind; not standing haughtily aloof as you and I would have stood, and refusing to tolerate such puerility, but cordially sympathizing with it, and submitting to its humiliating exactions, precisely as a tender father accommodates his thought and his speech, his stature and his gait, to the necessities of lisping and tottering childhood. Now by what virtue did God do all this? For what end could He be brought to endure this dense carnality, and suckle with the milk of an unswerving forbearance, a stupidity so thankless and immovable?

It was wholly by virtue of his approaching Incarnation. The love which was ever bringing onwards the hour when He would embody Himself in human flesh, and sanctify therefore the lowest earthly life, permitted Him to slight no occasion of effecting a preliminary lodgment in the human understanding. This Jewish typicality, this extraordinary Divine interference with seasons and days, with fasts and festivals, with meats and drinks, with houses and furni-

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ture, with dress and decoration, grew on the inner side out of God's ESSENTIAL humanity, that humanity which is one with all goodness and truth and order; and on the outer side pointed to His ADVENTITIOUS or ACCESSORY humanity, to that which He was going to assume in the person of Christ, and by which He should yet sanctify every feature of our common or natural life. Because God in the fulness of human extremity, was going Himself to descend to the dimensions of the finite consciousness, and grow familiar with all that was mean and low and intrinsically abhorrent in the creature's experience, in order that by such familiarity He might purge that experience, and lay a basis, through the subjection of universal evil to good, for a new and sublimer evolution of human destiny: therefore He was prospectively seen busying Himself with the civil and domestic economies, with the public and private righteousness of this purely representative people, and addressing them in the exactest consistency with their dramatic character and function. All preceding human history tended

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to the Incarnation, or shaped itself to the necessities of that ineffable Mercy. It was not an arbitrary appointment that Christ should be born of a Jewish mother. The uses which the Divine Love would effect by the Incarnation, were universal uses, uses which involved the entire realm of human life, heaven with its myriad sunny activities, and hell no less with its lurid and sombre stagnations, and the fair and innocent earth itself, which is the unconscious progeny of their antagonism. But these uses could not have taken place, unless Christ had been brought by the maternal side, by the tendencies He inherited from the mother, into contact with the most external spheres of spiritual life, those which are most remote so to speak from the heart of things, and correspond to the very epidermis and scarfskin of humanity. Being born in this outermost court and circumference of universal life, His experience embraced the entire sweep of creation from the highest seraph to the most sensuous and stupid clod ; and the Divine influx reported itself to his soul therefore most exactly laden with all

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the limitation, modification, or perversion it derived from the multitudinous phases of good and evil existence.

This Jewish legalism and carnality, therefore, were the appropriate matrix and starting-point of Christ's redemption. Unless He had found himself from his very infancy in antagonism with human folly and conceit, some portion of His Divine labor must have been slurred over, and for ever invited medication. In that case indeed He must have acquiesced in his family or national pretensions, and still further inflamed the existing Divine distance from man. But as it was he was born an object of the intensest fanaticism, and of the most selfish idolatry. He was looked upon from the hour of his birth as a Jew of the Jews, born to be their Deliverer and King indeed, and to carry the national name to unprecedented summits of renown. From the very beginning of consciousness accordingly He was a stranger in his own home, a self-driven outcast from the sympathies and hopes of His people. From the very beginning of his career the personal ambi-

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tions and aspirations, which you and I, by virtue of our finite derivation find so soothing and flattering, awakened in him only the intensest sorrow and revulsion. The thoughts and lusts of personal aggrandizement which flowed into his soul, and fed themselves even by the holy texts which were assiduously cited to sustain his peculiar pretensions, encountered there the infinite Divine Love; and the amazement and the conflict and the anguish which this encounter generated on the infirm or human side of the illustrious sufferer, are only dimly shadowed by his wilderness states, by his hunger and thirst, by his flesh sweating blood, and the transcendent passion of the cross. Now all this conflict and anguish were patiently borne—to what end? Only that the human selfhood in the person of Christ might be perfectly united with the Divine Love, and the purification of human life go on, therefore, no longer by an outward pressure merely, or the force of circumstances, but by the inward and spontaneous law of its new and Divine source.

As I have already said, there was no one at

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Christ's day capable of understanding these spiritual *arcana* of the Divine kingdom. Even those who professed to believe in him utterly misapprehended the spiritual scope of His mission. He was thus forced into giving His truth a carnal or figurative embodiment, in order to effect the least lodgment for it in the human mind. He accordingly selected two rites familiar to the Jewish church, and modifying them into memorials of His own spirit, bequeathed them to the observance of his followers. Here consequently was the basis of a new spiritual order in the other world, strictly ministerial to the ultimate perfect evolution of human destiny; and at the same time the nucleus or germ of a new ecclesiastical expansion, which might gradually soften the lineaments of the old theocracy, and sublimate all that was formal and servile in its worship into the spirit of the widest human charity.

The ecclesiastical phase of history has had exactly this effect. While the individual soul has been sheltered in its bosom, and inwardly guarded from the incursion of evils and falses

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which else might have devastated his spiritual life, the church has been all the while performing an inestimable *public* service, in bringing forth the scientific idea of a perfect society on earth, or a regenerate human brotherhood. It was the idea of a brotherhood in Christ from which the visible church originally started; it is precisely that idea which the visible church has always represented; and it is that idea which the visible church is destined ere long perfectly to fulfil or embody. Few in the church have been sagacious enough to foresee its ultimate bearings upon nature, but the work has gone unceasingly on nevertheless. It is the church, viewed ecclesiastically, which has inoculated science with the conception of a social destiny for man on the earth. It is the church which has made the world wiser than herself, by putting into its practical keeping the transcendent verities which she herself has been competent only to guard. It is in short our old ecclesiasticism which has preserved the dogma of Christ's Divinity, until science is at length growing mature enough to grasp it, and

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run it through the infinite series of uses to which alone it is worthily applicable.

Nothing is more striking in the history of the church, than the unceasing tendency towards the secularization of the hierarchical element. In Roman Catholicism the idea of the church as a supernatural institution, as a regenerate society rightfully claiming the secular allegiance and subordination, got fully pronounced and established. Ages elapsed before it did so, but the time at length came when the Church shone paramount in the earth, and dealt with the State as a subject institution. No sooner however had this end been accomplished, no sooner had the Church asserted its rightful supremacy to the State, or vindicated its title to a *super*-natural institution, than it began to diffuse the sacredness, of which it was all compact, over the secular life. In the then aspect of things, the church meant the sacerdotal caste, meant those who officiated at the altar, and dispensed the heavenly bread to the unsanctified people. But now a dawning protest against this restricted conception of the

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church appeared, and did not cease to grow until its light had covered more than one half of the ecclesiastical heavens, and Protestantism stood announced a fixed and admirable fact. Protestantism denied the exclusive sanctity of the priesthood, and affirmed that the church stood in the priesthood and the laity quite equally. It held that life did not come only through the sacraments as administered by the priests; that it came also through the independent operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer's bosom, whether he had received priestly benediction or not. This was an immense Christianization of the secular element, an immense democratizing of the idea of the church. But it took Unitarianism, or Rationalism to complete the process. This new movement denied the supernatural or hierarchical element in the church, *in toto*, and resolved the church into a refined or cultivated natural good. It denied the Divinity of its founder, turning him into a man of extraordinary natural endowments merely, and consequently cut the church off from any sanctity more Divine than nature

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itself boasted. The distinction between clergy and laity is thus made to disappear altogether, or claim at most a conventional truth, while the church itself becomes a cultivated and beautiful mundane society.

None of these ecclesiastical changes have been wilful. None of them dates from any private influence. They are all alike spontaneous outgrowths of the human mind. None of them shapes the popular sentiment ; they all alike reflect it. And hence their historic value or significance. They are so many landmarks of the growing natural intelligence of man, showing the degree in which that intelligence, in obedience to the new instincts which are informing it from on high, has been all the while conforming itself to the Christian idea of brotherhood. The old ecclesiasticism has indeed effectually used itself up in the process. But this is not a thing to be lamented. The shell of a nut is thrown away, without remorse, when the kernel is plucked out. The egg is thoroughly used up in giving sustenance to the nascent life which germinated in it. And cer-

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tainly the old ecclesiasticism has no right to complain, after bringing men to believe that the Divine Spirit is in the most vital and intimate contact with them in the field and at the fireside, in the counting-house and the workshop, in their business and their pleasures, in solitude and in society, if they in turn regard her work as accomplished, and cease accordingly to value the egg out of which the chicken has peeped. The real Church of Christ, which is one with the Church in the heavens, the Spiritual Church, the fellowship of those who are inwardly illumined and regenerated by His Spirit, is immortal, and will only become the more pronounced and abundant by the ecclesiastical catastrophe. But the self-styled and visible church must eventually and infallibly merge in a regenerate natural society, or a brotherhood of men established upon the widest scientific induction and experience.

Our own condition is a brilliant fulfilment and exemplification of this necessity. We are a State without a Church, that is, without the ecclesiastical form of the church. We nation-

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ally conceive the ecclesiastical age of the church to be past, and declare God to be in direct contact with the most secular aims and methods of life. We have but one recognized fast, which is a fast every seven days from labor, and that enforced only by the demands of the social convenience; and but one festival, the annual Thanksgiving, which commemorates the Divine bounty as exhibited in the maintenance of our physical, political, and social prosperity. And it is the State which alone vitalizes these institutions. The ecclesiastical power, considered as apart from the State has no voice in their authentication, and is indeed utterly defunct as to its public consequences. Many private persons continue diligently to patronize and matronize it, but the public conscience is so completely committed to the sole sacredness of man, that institutions the most pompous which claim an independent sanctity, can never again hope to attract even its curiosity.

Do not misunderstand me. I have nothing but respect and affection for the established institutions of worship, and I believe

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that those institutions will go on to be enlarged rather than diminished. That is to say, I believe that the various Christian sects will continue to flourish, until the growing intelligence of society lifts them into a larger conception of religious truth, and inaugurates a superb and unitary worship, expressing the instincts of a regenerate human brotherhood. At that day all our existing sects will have fused in a grand Christian fellowship, while every human use which they have inducted or only indicated, will be more largely resumed and more adequately fulfilled by the social organization of which they have been mainly introductory.

And now, my dear sir, fare you well, and believe me, with every sentiment of esteem and fraternity,

Your servant in the truth.

THE END.

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